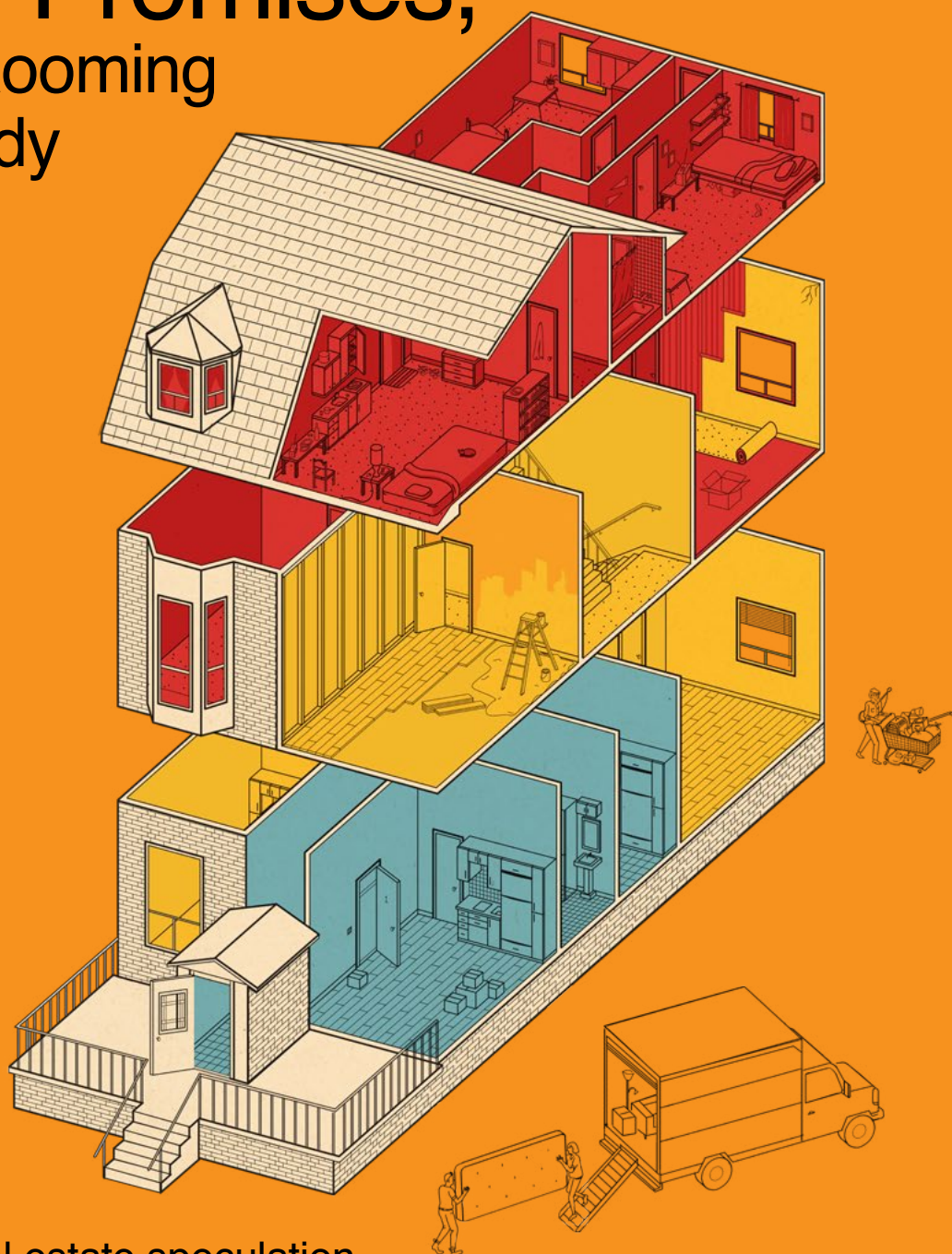


No Room For Unkept Promises, Parkdale Rooming House Study



The impact of real estate speculation,
upscaling, and conversion on rooming
house loss in Parkdale

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Finally, thanks go to the many rooming house tenants in Parkdale who bravely shared their stories with our study team. We hope that these contributions will be honoured by meaningful action to preserve affordable rooming houses in Parkdale and beyond.

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The logo for Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust features a large, white, stylized letter 'A' that is partially filled with a dark blue color. The text 'Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust' is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font, with the words stacked vertically and partially overlaid by the 'A' graphic.

**Parkdale
Neighbourhood
Land Trust**

Ontario
Trillium Foundation



Fondation Trillium
de l'Ontario

An agency of the Government of Ontario
Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario





Executive Summary



198
ROOMING
HOUSES

59
AT RISK
OF LOSS

28
ALREADY
LOST



HOUSING
2,715
PEOPLE

HOUSING
818
PEOPLE

DE-HOUSING
347
PEOPLE

THE PARKDALE ROOMING HOUSE STUDY

The rooming house has been a critical source of accessible and affordable housing in Parkdale since the 1930s but has been stigmatized by and under pressure from government and community groups for just as long. As the economic tides of Parkdale continue to shift with increasing gentrification, resulting in higher property values, Parkdale's rooming houses face new challenges to their existence. Formerly affordable private rooming houses are being lost at an alarming rate, either through speculative upscaling to higher-income rental housing—a new and concerning trend we call “upscale gentrification”—or through conversion to single-family homes.

The Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust (PNLT) was commissioned to determine the number and condition of rooming houses in Parkdale and to assess the impact of gentrification and real estate speculation on rooming house loss. The scale of what we have found—both in terms of the size and importance of this affordable housing stock as well as the rate at which it is disappearing—has alarmed the research team, non-profits, and government alike.

Our research found 198 rooming houses in Parkdale with an estimated 2,715 dwelling rooms — more than double the 1300 units owned by Toronto Community Housing within the study boundaries. We have also documented an

escalating crisis of rooming house loss. The research confirmed that in the past 10 years, 28 rooming houses have been lost to conversion and upscaling gentrification, displacing an estimated 347 people. We believe 59 more, housing 818 people, are at imminent risk of being lost.

This report does more, however, than quantify for the first time in Toronto the number of rooming house buildings, units, and residents within a community. It also identifies the human cost of this concerning scale of potential displacement. Continued loss of rooming houses in Parkdale will be catastrophic to the lives of hundreds of mostly low-income, vulnerable residents who depend on Parkdale's social and community supports and are at risk of eviction, displacement, and homelessness. We are on the edge of an escalating homelessness crisis: in 2016 Toronto's social housing waiting lists surpassed 177,000 people, while the City's 4674 shelter beds reached 96% occupancy.

We call on the non-profit and public sectors to respond urgently to this crisis. We propose a 10-year, coordinated, multi-partner Parkdale Rooming House Preservation Strategy to preserve, maintain, and develop this disappearing stock of affordable housing. As the Federal government is poised for a reinvestment in a 10-year national housing strategy, there is no room for unkept promises.

10 KEY FINDINGS

1. Parkdale has a substantial rooming house stock of 198 buildings, with 2,715 dwelling rooms—more than double the 1300 units owned by TCH in the area.
2. Neighbourhood change and real estate speculation, while not the only contributing factors, are the leading causes of rooming house loss through upscaling and/or conversion.
3. 28 private rooming houses or 12% of Parkdale's rooming houses have been lost in the last 10 years.
4. 86% of rooming houses are privately owned. These properties are heavily subsidized by public money that does not protect their long-term affordability.
5. 59 private rooming houses are at risk of upscaling and/or conversion, jeopardizing the housing stability of over 818 people.
6. Bachelorette buildings in particular are at imminent risk.
7. Currently no effective policy frameworks are in place to preserve rooming houses or their affordability.
8. Rooming house upscaling and conversion is causing an eviction crisis. Both legal and illegal evictions are common.
9. While most rooming house tenants are protected under the Residential Tenancies Act, many are unaware of their rights or do not have the desire or capacity to contest their eviction to the full extent of the law.
10. Many evicted tenants are displaced from Parkdale, losing access to its community and social services. Some become homeless. Some evictions lead to tragedies.

WE CALL ON THE NON-PROFIT AND PUBLIC SECTORS TO RESPOND URGENTLY TO THIS CRISIS. WE PROPOSE A 10-YEAR, COORDINATED, MULTI-PARTNER PARKDALE ROOMING HOUSE PRESERVATION STRATEGY.

Study Team Member Lynne Sky



01 Introduction



The Parkdale Rooming House Study was a six-month community-based research study. Supported by the Maytree Foundation, it was led by the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust (PNLT), with extensive collaboration from the Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre (PARC), Working for Change, John van Nostrand Developments (JvN/D), Habitat Services, and rooming house tenants.

The purpose of the study was threefold:

1. To develop a current baseline count of rooming houses in Parkdale.
 2. To assess the impact of neighbourhood change and real estate speculation on rooming house conversion and affordability, and on the displacement of tenants.
 3. To identify proactive measures to preserve rooming houses, protect affordability, and improve the housing of tenants.
-

1-1 WHY STUDY ROOMING HOUSE LOSS?

Parkdale is Changing

We stand at a pivotal point in the history of Parkdale, in which the intensifying pace of gentrification puts the long-term affordability of the neighbourhood at risk. An overvalued real estate market is squeezing out lower-profit land uses, regardless of their social value or benefit to community members. The neighbourhood's reputation as affordable is losing ground as homes for people living in poverty are converted and upscaled. Displaced tenants are increasingly forced to relocate to the inner suburbs, far from Parkdale's social and community supports, or worse, are forced into homelessness.

Increasing Rooming House Loss

While the trend of upscaling gentrification has been well documented in Parkdale's mid- to high-rise apartment buildings, now even rooming houses are at risk of becoming unaffordable.

Parkdale has a uniquely high density of rooming houses and boarding homes, a legacy from the deinstitutionalization of psychiatric patients into community-based care in the 1970s and 1980s. Rooming houses represent a vast yet highly stigmatized source of affordable housing in Parkdale. They are, for many, the only housing option available, and while increases in homelessness have been attributed to rooming house loss since the 1990s, only in recent years has their disappearance generated notable concern and action.

Previously, complacency was justified not only by stigma but also by the increasingly tenuous assumption that this type of housing, provided primarily by the private sector, was not at risk under private-sector ownership. In the past, rooming house providers were able to profit while providing housing to those with the fewest means. But growth in real estate value and development pressures have diminished the feasibility of operating a rooming house, providing ever-increasing speculative incentives for owners to sell or upscale rooming house properties.

The Parkdale Rooming House Study emerged in response to a wave of private rooming house conversions and high-profile evictions in the neighbourhood. Rooming house stock has become increasingly scarce as the pace of gentrification has accelerated in Parkdale, and the study is intended to drive a community-based, multi-partner response to this new crisis.

**THE PARKDALE
ROOMING HOUSE
STUDY EMERGES IN
RESPONSE TO A WAVE
OF PRIVATE
ROOMING HOUSE
CONVERSIONS AND
HIGH-PROFILE
EVICTIONS IN THE
NEIGHBOURHOOD.**

Community Calls for Equitable Development

The Parkdale Rooming House Study builds on the Parkdale Community Economic Development (PCED) planning project and the resulting Community Plan published in Fall 2016. During the study, which laid out plans for equitable development grounded in the community's shared values of Affordability, Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity, community members and agency staff identified the concerning trend of rooming house loss. Among the plan's recommendations is one proposing to "preserve and strengthen affordable housing through succession planning, [acquisition] and intensification."

Having assumed responsibility for examining rooming house loss, the PNLT is exploring how the Community Land Trust (CLT) model can be used to preserve and develop affordable housing, including rooming houses, to ensure that everyone has a place in Parkdale.

PNLT's rooming house study was undertaken with assistance from John van Nostrand Developments (JvN/D) and Working for Change, a local organization that provides education and employment opportunities for people disadvantaged by mental illness and addiction. The research was overseen by a steering committee including three rooming house tenant representatives and five community-sector practitioners.

1-2 DEFINING THE ROOMING HOUSE

Defining what exactly constitutes a rooming house can be a confusing task. The most basic definition is a building where tenants rent individual rooms from a landlord and share basic facilities such as kitchens, bathrooms, and common areas. But rooming house residents live in a great variety of types of units. Some have private rooms with shared bathrooms and kitchens, some share rooms with up to five other residents, and others may have private access to either a bathroom or a kitchen but share the other. Within any given building, some former single rooms may have been upgraded to include basic bathroom and kitchen facilities.

For the purposes of this study, we have therefore had to rely on an evolving understanding of rooming houses based on the following criteria.

- The property is licensed as a rooming house or bachelorette by the City of Toronto, or
- The property is a converted house or low-rise apartment building and
 - accommodates low-income residents
 - has shared facilities such as kitchens, bathrooms, or common areas
 - houses tenants that make individual lease agreements with the landowner
 - has dwelling units that average less than 50 m²

Definitions

City of Toronto Rooming House Definition:

The City of Toronto describes a rooming house as “a house, apartment or building where you share a kitchen and/or washroom with four or more people that pay individual rent.” Chapter 285 of the City of Toronto Municipal Code provides a more specific definition, with special attention paid to Parkdale. This amendment was made in response to the City-led Parkdale Pilot Project in 2000. The City of Toronto’s definition of rooming houses and bachelorettes in Parkdale is as follows:

- A. A building that contains dwelling rooms and may also contain one (1) or more dwelling units, where:
- (a) The dwelling rooms, in total are used or designed or intended for use as living accommodation by more than three (3) persons; and
 - (b) The living accommodation is provided in exchange for remuneration; or
- B. A building located within the area bounded on the north by Dundas Street West, on the east by Dufferin Street and the rail lines, on the South by Lake Shore Boulevard West and on the west by Roncesvalles Avenue, where:

- (a) The building is a converted house as defined in former City of Toronto General Zoning By-law No. 438-86, as amended;
- (b) The building contains more than three dwelling units;
- (c) The average floor area of the dwelling units is less than 65 m²; and
- (d) One or more dwelling units are intended to be used in return for remuneration.

Bachelorette:

The City of Toronto licenses rooming houses and bachelorettes. Bachelorettes are exclusive to Parkdale and are a product of the Parkdale Pilot Project. The term is used interchangeably with “rooming house” and does not denote any additional facilities. All licensed facilities in Parkdale are included in the baseline analysis of this study.

Shared Facilities:

A property identified as having shared bathroom and/or kitchen facilities.

Size of Units:

The City of Toronto’s Parkdale-specific definition of rooming houses refers to buildings with units less than 65 m² (700 ft²). We felt that 700 ft² was too high a benchmark to set as a maximum size for a rooming house unit. New condominium developments sell one- and two-bedroom units in 700 ft² spaces. We therefore excluded properties where we could confirm that the average floor space of units was greater than 50 m² (538 ft²) unless we had evidence indicating that those spaces were shared.

Other Shared Housing Models in Parkdale

Boarding Homes:

Boarding homes provide meals and basic amenities, such as laundry facilities and furniture, in addition to accommodation. Some level of staffing is also typically provided, and some boarding homes have some association with an organization that provides outside support to tenants. The tenant profile of boarding homes varies significantly from building to building.

Care Homes:

Care homes generally focus on housing for the elderly, although long-term care homes exist for those with serious, high-needs physical disabilities. The services range from basic housekeeping and staffing to meal preparation, personal care, medication management, and 24-hour supervision, depending on the needs and stability of the health of the residents.

Supportive Housing:

The general principle behind supportive housing is that some form of additional support for a particular need beyond accommodation is provided by an organization. Some organizations provide full-time, live-in staff support, some provide support during business hours, and others provide weekly or bi-weekly support and are available on-call for emergencies. Support services can be provided for needs related to mental health, HIV/AIDS, and physical or developmental disabilities, among others.

1-3 ROOMING HOUSE LOSS ACROSS CANADA

Rooming houses and other forms of shared housing have been subject to conversion and loss across Canada. Market pressures leading to sale combined with licensing and regulatory regimes that fail to protect rooming houses have put significant pressure on the stock, as demonstrated by recent studies in Halifax, Winnipeg, and Vancouver.

Winnipeg has experienced a dramatic decline in the number of rooming houses. A study by Andrew Kaufman at the University of Winnipeg's Institute of Urban Studies found that between 2002 and 2014 Winnipeg suffered losses of 40% and 63% of rooming house stock in the Spence and West Broadway neighbourhoods, a loss impacting between 930 and 1,410 residents. The loss has been attributed to increased market pressures, fires, demolition, or conversion to single-family homes, duplexes, and triplexes. The study also noted that some converted rooming houses have in fact been transitioned to other forms of non-profit affordable housing. The report concluded, however, that "[t]he continued disappearance of rooming houses will create further crisis for those most in need of housing."¹

In Halifax, a 2016 study by Uytas Lee of the School of Planning at Dalhousie University found a comparable trend of rooming house loss. The study identified that since 1995 97 out of 151 or 64.2% of rooming houses have been lost. The study also identified 57 new quasi-rooming houses (primarily unlicensed student housing), observing that these properties catered to a higher-income clientele and were not situated around necessary social services, as the older-model rooming houses were.²

In Vancouver, the loss of affordable housing in the Downtown Eastside has been acute. The loss has largely taken place in converted hotels, which charge monthly rent for single rooms with shared facilities, a typology known as Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels. The anti-poverty advocacy organization Carnegie Community Action Project

has conducted annual studies of the SRO stock since 2008, visiting the over 100 SRO hotels in person to assess costs, closures, and conversions. The 2015 study found that between 2009 and 2015 the average lowest rents in hotels surveyed increased from \$398 to \$517. The number of rooms in hotels where all rooms rent for \$375 or less fell from 777 to 155 during this same time.³

Responses to the Loss of Rooming Houses

In Winnipeg, community reaction to the loss of rooming houses has been proactive. Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations (NRCs) in both West Broadway and Spence administer three public funds directed at upgrading distressed rental properties and have led initiatives such as neighbourhood safety plans, safety audits, tenant support, and community policing. An earlier study by the Institute of Urban Studies in 2002 made 10 recommendations related to increased funding, safety improvements, and better communication between tenants, landowners, the community, and government. Of these, two were fully implemented, three partially, and five not. The development of new smaller-sized units was also proposed as a solution to the disappearance of existing stock. The Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative and all three levels of government funded the construction of houses containing eight "pocket suites" measuring 210 ft².⁴

In Vancouver, BC Housing has dedicated considerable resources to proactively securing at least part of the Downtown Eastside's affordable SRO hotel stock. In 2007, BC Housing purchased 24 SRO hotels, and in 2011 announced the SRO Renewal Initiative to renew and restore 13 of these buildings.⁵ The City of Vancouver also responded with a by-law aimed at preventing tenant displacement and the loss of this housing stock by regulating building alteration, conversion, and demolition. While rents have continued to increase in Vancouver, these efforts have helped mitigate or prevent the most significant SRO losses. This proactive and coordinated preservation strategy of acquisition, rehabilitation and policy change represents a strong precedent that should inspire similar action across Canada.

02 Community-Based Research Process & Methods



As a community-based research study with the explicit objectives to both document the current status of rooming houses in Parkdale and to identify proactive measures to preserve them, this study involved a two-phase process:

Phase 1: Rooming House Count

Phase 2: Preservation Strategy Development

2-1 PHASE 1: ROOMING HOUSE COUNT RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The rooming house count relied on a neighbourhood-wide sidewalk survey, door-to-door follow-ups, interviews, and analysis of documentary sources to identify rooming houses and confirm their current status and characteristics. Every effort was made to corroborate information from multiple sources, in keeping with the established social science methodology of data triangulation, which was also employed in a Halifax study of rooming houses discussed above. The study sought to generate a wide range of data about each property, all of which was entered into a central database. Basic information included the building address, owner, type of units, rental costs, number of units, and number of residents. In cases where a numbered or named corporation was listed as the owner, every effort was made to assign an individual owner's name to the building. By searching public records we were able to identify several individuals who owned several properties in Parkdale under different corporations. Observations, notes, sources of information,

and any other information was entered in a separate column for each property.

The starting point for the rooming house data collection was the City of Toronto's Municipal Licensing & Standards list of licensed rooming houses and bachelorettes. Early stages of the research revealed that the list maintained by the City



Survey in Action



**"THESE FINDINGS WILL
HELP US MAKE A CASE
TO THE GOVERNMENT
TO ACT NOW TO FUND
A MODEL THAT WILL
WORK."**

- Lynne Sky, Community-Based Researcher

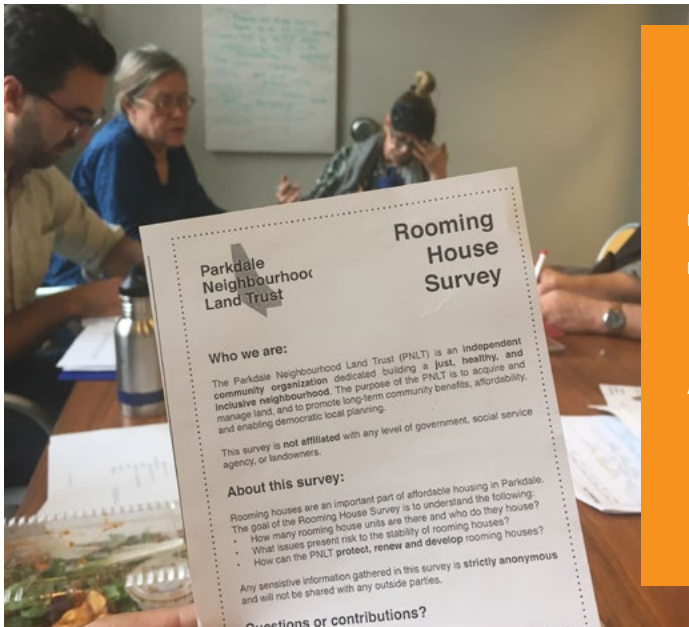
was incomplete or inconsistent. The list contained only the address of the property and the expiry date of the licence, and addresses appeared, disappeared, and reappeared from year to year even though many remained rooming houses. The PNLT had also maintained a list of sites of interest, identified by community members and organizations.

Primary Sources

The research team had to cast a wide net to gather accurate information on potential rooming house properties. City of Toronto documents were of the most use, and included zoning by-law amendments, City staff reports, Toronto and East York Community Council and City Council minutes, and building permits and minor variance applications. The team also employed Municipal Property Assessment Corporation data, for information on ownership status especially. Other public sources included Ontario Municipal Board documents and provincial healthcare funding documents, among others.

Searches were also made of sites such as Craigslist, Kijiji, and Airbnb, which allowed us to determine whether some buildings were still renting out rooms at affordable rents, or had been converted to short-term or higher-market units. Real estate websites were monitored for sales of rooming house properties.

Research is an
OrganizEd and
Systematic way to
gEt
Answers to questions
foR
soCial
cHange



"I'VE EXPERIENCED HOUSING ISSUES AND I'VE GONE THROUGH DIFFICULT TIMES. SO I CAN RELATE TO THE CHALLENGES PEOPLE ARE FACING. I'M A GOOD LISTENER AND FRIEND. PEOPLE CAN CONFIDE IN ME."

- Trevor Hardy, Community-Based Researcher

As the study progressed, it became apparent that additional financial and market information would be necessary to develop a model of acquisition and development. Whereas most existing rooming house research has focused on quantifying the loss of rooming houses, this research also sought to understand the underlying economics of rooming house provision and mitigate the factors contributing to rooming house disappearance. The research team compiled information about operating costs, income sources, subsidy models, sales data, and planning and development statistics from publicly available sources.

Community-Based Research

The Steering Committee decided to use a community-based research approach, employing researchers who knew the Parkdale community and/or had experience living in rooming houses so they could contribute their knowledge of the area and the issues to the project. Five researchers were recruited from PARC members as well as graduates of a pre-employment program at Working for Change. All of the researchers had experience living in rooming houses and several lived in the Parkdale neighbourhood. They were given an orientation to the project and received training in interview protocol and practices. The five then assisted in the development of a questionnaire that they used to conduct a street survey to ascertain the number of rooming houses currently operating in Parkdale. The survey began in October 2016 and was completed in December 2016. It took approximately 190 hours to complete.

Surveys

Survey boundary: The study encompassed an area running along Dufferin from the Gardiner to Queen, following the rail corridor two blocks north of Queen Street, east along Seaforth and Pearson to Roncesvalles, and south again to the Gardiner. This area captures all of South Parkdale and a portion of Parkdale above Queen that still retains some of its affordable units. The study was scoped to this area as it became apparent through the street survey that few rooming houses north of this boundary remained.

Sidewalk Survey: CBRs conducted a site walk of every block in Parkdale. Working in pairs, CBRs verified the existing list and identified possible rooming houses using visual criteria such as:

- Overall state of repair of property
- Improvised window coverings
- Improvised shared areas, usually for smoking and socializing
- High number of mailboxes, hydro meters, or buzzers
- Signs of eviction such as furniture on the street

Door-To-Door Survey: Using the results of the sidewalk survey, the CBRs conducted a door-to-door survey of all possible rooming houses, visiting every property on the list to speak to residents and neighbours. CBRs either verified or eliminated properties from the list and generated data about rent, typology, number of residents, and landowner.

Interviews

Drop-In Interviews: CBRs also conducted one-on-one interviews with local residents at drop-ins and community events across Parkdale. The CBRs spoke to residents at PARC, St Francis Table, Parkdale United, and other community locations and had residents of rooming houses fill out brief factual surveys about their residences.

Landowner Interviews: The study team conducted one-on-one interviews with 12 owners of both licensed and unlicensed properties. Eight of these interviews took place with rooming house owners who owned at least one property that was part of the Habitat Services program. These interviews generated important insights into the history of rooming houses and licensing; the costs and challenges of rooming house operation related to expenses, upkeep, residents, and the municipality; and the risks and opportunities facing rooming houses in the future.

Social Service Provider Interviews: The study team met with housing providers PARC, Cota, Ecuhome, and Habitat Services to gather information about their properties and any other properties they were aware of. The team also met with PARC drop-in staff and the PARC outreach team, who provided information on rooming houses and introductions to other community members with information.

City Staff Interviews: The team also met with representatives from City Planning, Municipal Licensing & Standards, and the office of the Councillor for Ward 14, Gord Perks.

Assumptions and Constraints of the Research

Without unrestricted access to the properties, it is impossible to know for sure what is going on inside each building. Our application of the above criteria had to be flexible in order to avoid falsely excluding potential rooming house properties.

Wherever possible, we have corroborated information from documentary sources with on-the-ground research. Using these sources, we have attempted to mitigate the most significant constraints faced in this research:

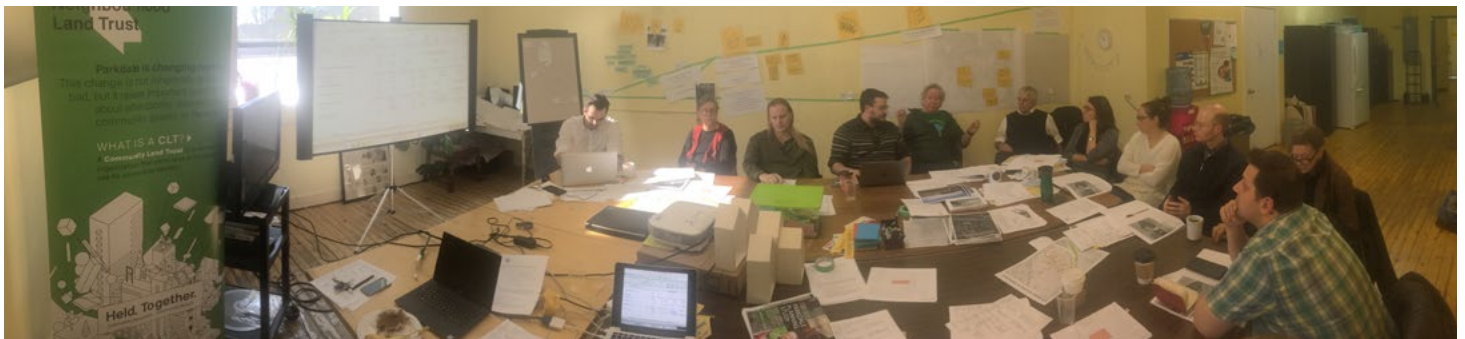
Lack of Access: Despite numerous visits, some homes remained inaccessible to us. Given the shared nature of the housing and the marginalized circumstances of many residents, there is often little incentive to answer the door. Some sites have thus been listed as possible rooming houses.

Unclear City Documentation: The City of Toronto rooming house licensing process has been piecemeal, and properties often disappear and reappear on the licensing list from one year to the next. The licensing process is also self-reported, and in certain cases it has been unclear whether or not a building containing, for example, several dwelling rooms and a three-bedroom dwelling unit was not simply renting out all rooms individually. City staff in Municipal Licensing & Standards expressed uncertainty about the internal consistency of the definition of rooming houses across different City departments and the total numbers of buildings, units, and residents in Parkdale.

2-2 PHASE 2: ROOMING HOUSE PRESERVATION STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

As a community-based research study with an explicit objective to “identify proactive measures to preserve rooming houses, protect affordability and improve the housing of tenants,” our process involved a two-month phase of strategy development. Throughout this process our team actively consulted other non-profit housing organizations, sector experts, development consultants, City staff, front-line housing support staff, and tenants. The process included:

- Multi-partner strategy development meetings
- Expert pressure test pitch, hosted by Maytree
- Strategy co-design workshop



Parkdale Rooming House Study Strategy Co-Design Workshop.

03 The Status of Rooming Houses in Parkdale



Key findings include:

1. Parkdale has a substantial rooming house stock of 198 buildings.
2. These buildings are home to 2,715 people—more than double than are housed by TCH in the area.
3. 86% of rooming houses are privately owned.
4. Private rooming houses are heavily subsidized by public money yet that does not protect their affordability.
5. 12% of Parkdale's rooming houses have been lost in the past 10 years.
6. Neighbourhood change has accelerated the loss of rooming houses to a crisis.

3-1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The research team examined City of Toronto data from the late 1990s to the present and undertook surveys and interviews to produce new data. Our study confirmed that 28 former rooming houses have been converted in the past decade to other uses, including single-family homes, Airbnb rentals, and higher-priced rental apartments, displacing an estimated 347 residents. Nonetheless, we revealed a vast and previously unaccounted for stock of deeply affordable housing in Parkdale.

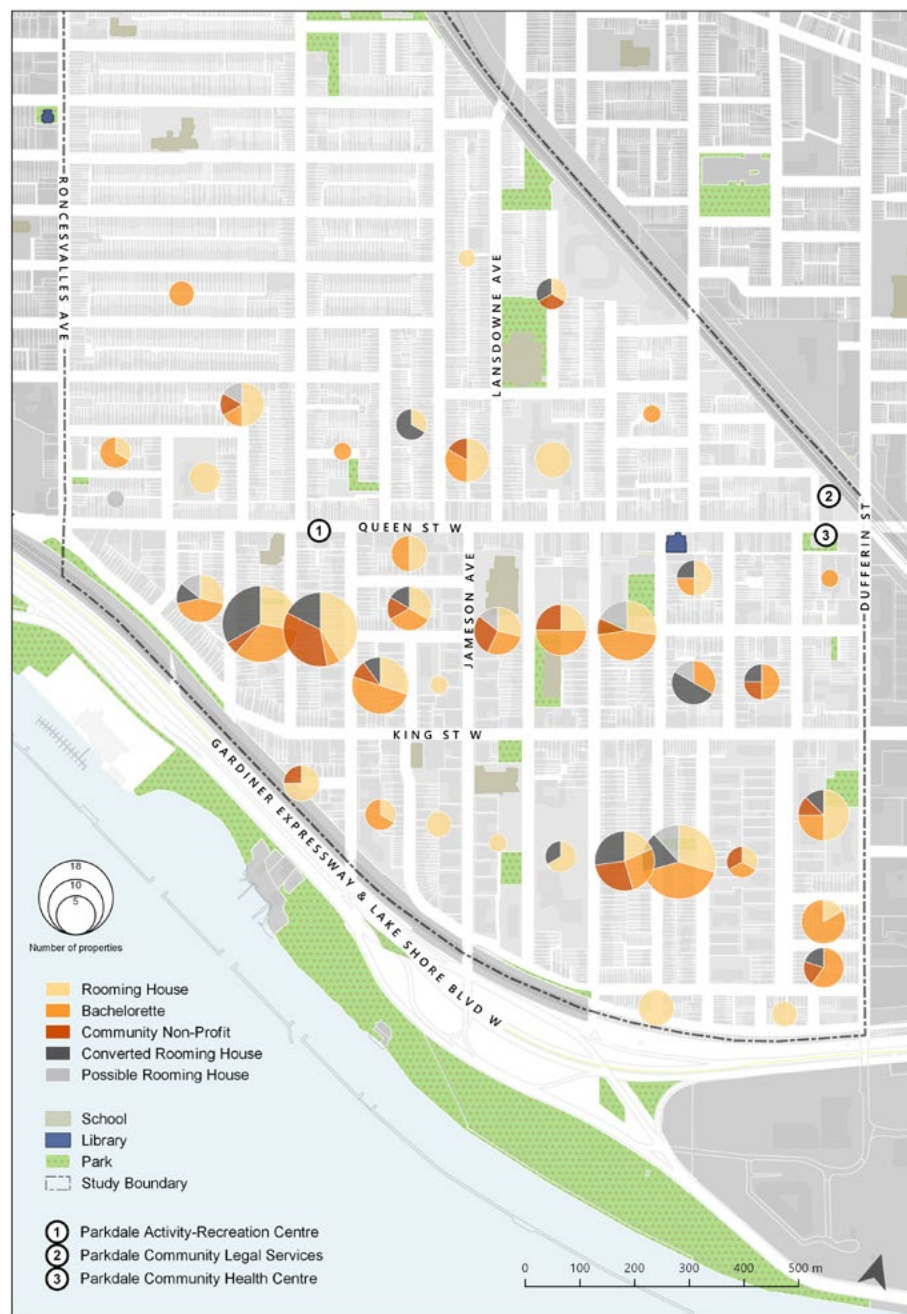
We found a current total of 198 rooming houses, bachelorette buildings, community non-profit buildings and possible rooming houses, all housing an estimated 2,715 residents. To put the scale of the importance of this housing stock in Parkdale into context, it provides more than double the 1300 units owned by Toronto Community Housing within the study boundaries.

Our count of 198 also greatly exceeds the 112 licensed rooming houses in Parkdale that were known to the City in early 2017. This means that 86 rooming houses are unaccounted for in the City's considerations of affordable housing, licensing, and safety.

This section of the report provides a clear picture of the different types of rooming houses and buildings of interest in Parkdale, and explains the financial operating models that sustain for-profit and non-profit rooming houses.

ROOMING HOUSES IN PARKDALE

March 2017



Sources: Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust, City of Toronto, Statistics Canada

**PARKDALE CURRENTLY HAS 198
ROOMING HOUSES THAT CAN
HOUSE 2,715 RESIDENTS.**

3-2 TYPES OF ROOMING HOUSES

87 Private Rooming Houses

Private rooming houses are owned and operated entirely by private individuals and corporations. Although tenants may pay their rent through public assistance, owners have little contact with government agencies besides regular property inspections for licensed properties. Private rooming houses largely comprise individual rooms with shared bathrooms and kitchens, although some rooms may contain elements of these amenities, such as a fridge or sink.

75 Private Bachelorette Rooming Houses

Private bachelorette buildings are also owned and operated entirely by private individuals. Many are former rooming houses that have been substantially modified and expanded. Their internal layouts vary significantly, with units ranging in size from a room with some amenities to one- or two-bedroom units. They typically contain more units than rooming houses—upwards of 35 in some cases.

28 Community Non-Profit Buildings

Community non-profit buildings are owned and/or operated by non-profit organizations. They generally have many of the same physical characteristics as private rooming houses (such as shared facilities or shared rooms), but often have a mandate broader than affordable housing provision. For example, some specialize in services for people with special medical needs or specific demographics. The study identified 28 community non-profit buildings containing a confirmed 452 residents. Some of these properties once operated as private rooming houses but have been brought into non-profit management or ownership. Some are owned by private property owners, but managed and operated by a non-profit housing organization, which generally secures use of the property through a long-term head lease. These sites are mostly stable, however the study did identify one site where the owner expressed interest in selling the buildings on the open market in five years' time when the current lease expires.

Summary of All Rooming Houses, Bachelorettes, Community Non-Profit Buildings and Possible Rooming Houses

Type of Building	Number of Buildings	Number of Residents Confirmed	Sites Without Resident Data	Total Population, Rooming Houses, Bachelorettes, Community Non-Profits and Possible Rooming Houses*
Rooming House	87	696	41	1,253
Bachelorette Rooming House	75	738	16	955
Community Non-Profit Building	28	384	5	452
Possible Rooming House	8	14	3	55
Total	198	1,832	-	2,715

Converted Rooming Houses

Type of Building	Number of Buildings	Number of Residents Confirmed	Sites Without Resident Data	Total Former Population of Converted Rooming Houses*
Total	28	170	13	347

Notes

*Sites without resident numbers times average number of residents in confirmed buildings plus the number of confirmed residents

Average Number of Residents	13.58
-----------------------------	-------

28 Converted Rooming Houses (Lost)

The study was able to confirm that 28 former rooming houses had been converted to other uses, including single-family homes, Airbnb rentals, and higher-priced rental apartments. These conversions displaced an estimated 324 residents. This is a conservative estimate. Anecdotal evidence suggests that several properties licensed by the City are retaining licenses despite now operating as self-contained, market-rate apartments. This list of converted buildings also does not capture properties that once operated as unlicensed rooming houses but were converted before the beginning of this study. Further information about the causes of loss are contained in the following section.

3 Abandoned/Vacant Properties

The study identified several abandoned or vacant properties. Some of these were once rooming houses but have for a variety of reasons been vacated by the existing owners. Other properties listed under this category were included because of their role in potential new development projects.

3-3 ROOMING HOUSE TENANTS

The study found 198 rooming houses, bachelorette buildings, suspected rooming houses, and community non-profit buildings housing an estimated 2,715 residents. Buildings averaged a resident count of just over 13 people and in many cases residents shared rooms.

In quantifying the number of rooming house buildings, units, and residents, this report identifies the concerning scale of potential displacement and its attendant human cost.

Of the 198 rooming houses identified, we believe 59 are at risk of sale or conversion, putting an estimated 818 people at risk of losing their housing. This represents 28% of the neighbourhood's rooming house stock.

Source:

Hwang, S; Martin, R; Tolomiczenko, G; Hulchanski, D. (2003). *The Relationship Between Housing Conditions and Health Status of Rooming House Residents in Toronto*. Canadian Journal of Public Health, Vol 94, No 6, 2013.

Demographic Profile

As part of this study we did not undertake primary research on the demographic profiles of rooming house tenants in Parkdale. In the absence of Parkdale-specific demographic data on rooming house tenants, it is worthwhile to look at city-wide data. A 2003 study of the health status of rooming house tenants published by the Canadian Journal of Public Health interviewed 295 rooming house residents from across 171 rooming houses in Toronto. Anecdotally, the statistics appear generally in keeping with what this research observed about the demographics of Parkdale rooming house tenants.

HEALTH STATUS OF ROOMING HOUSE RESIDENTS

TABLE 1
Characteristics of Rooming House Residents, Overall and by Gender

Characteristic	Overall n=295	Men n=249	Women n=46	p-value
Age, mean (years)	40.6	41.3	37.2	0.071
Ethnic group				0.104*
White	82.3	83.5	73.9	
Non-white	17.7	16.5	26.1	
Black	8.5	7.2	15.2	
Aboriginal	2.4	2.0	4.3	
Asian	3.4	2.8	6.5	
Other	3.4	4.0	0	
Marriage status				0.038
Single, never married	63.7	64.0	62.2	
Divorced/separated	27.7	29.1	20.0	
Married/common-law	6.5	5.7	11.1	
Other	2.1	1.2	6.7	
Education level				0.017
Grade school	11.9	12.4	8.7	
Some high school	34.6	34.5	34.8	
High school graduate	18.6	21.3	4.3	
Some university	20.0	18.9	26.1	
University graduate	14.9	12.9	26.1	
Employment status				0.005
Unemployed	66.0	69.4	47.8	
Employed	34.0	30.6	52.2	
Monthly income, mean (\$)	962	950	1037	0.529
Ever homeless in lifetime				0.645
Yes	35.6	36.1	32.6	
No	64.4	63.9	67.4	
Homeless in past 5 years				0.120
Yes	23.1	24.5	15.2	
No	76.9	75.5	84.8	
Smoking status				0.187
Daily smoker	56.6	58.6	45.7	
Occasional smoker	5.4	5.6	4.3	
Non-smoker	38.0	35.7	50.0	
Alcohol consumption past year				0.603
None	33.6	32.1	41.3	
≤ Once a month	7.1	6.8	8.7	
Once a month	6.4	5.2	13.0	
2-3 times a month	10.2	9.6	13.0	
Once a week	11.2	12.4	4.3	
2-3 times a week	16.9	16.9	17.4	
4-6 times a week	4.7	5.6	0	
Every day	9.8	11.2	2.2	
Ever had drinking problem				0.066
Yes	31.7	33.9	20.0	
No	68.3	66.1	80.0	
Substance use in past year				0.419
None	68.9	68.4	71.7	
One substance	17.1	18.2	10.9	
≥ Two substances	14.0	13.4	17.4	

* Comparison of ethnic groups was based on the categories of white and non-white. Figures shown are percentages, unless otherwise indicated. P-value is shown for the comparison between men and women. Gender comparisons were made using independent sample t-tests for continuous variables and Pearson chi-square for categorical variables.

3-4 BUILDING TYPOLOGIES

Converted Homes

Many of Parkdale's rooming houses are located in the Victorian homes that define the neighbourhood. These buildings typically date between 1880 and 1900, although many have been subject to major exterior alterations. The houses are typically 2.5 to 3.5 storeys located on 150-ft by 30-ft lots. Many older homes have been stripped of maintenance-intensive architectural detailing, have additions on the front or rear, or accessibility features added on. Maintenance standards are typically kept as low as possible, and many buildings have substantial deferred maintenance issues related to the roof, foundation, or building envelope.

Room sizes vary considerably. The Habitat Services contract specifies a minimum of 75 ft² for single rooms. The buildings for which the study was able to determine room size averaged around 200 ft², but it is impossible to know which larger rooms are shared by multiple people, or how many rooms have been further sub-divided. Somewhere between 70% and 80% of the total floor space is occupied by living quarters.

Low-Rise Apartments

The second most common model of rooming houses in Parkdale is the purpose-built low-rise bachelorette building. These buildings date from the post-war period and many were built and operated by the same party. Several buildings were built with single rooms with no private amenities, but gradually some units have been outfitted with basic kitchen or bathroom facilities.

Single Resident Occupancy Hotels

The Single Resident Occupancy (SRO) hotel typology is no longer present in Parkdale, but was once a typical form of rooming house. The last building functioning as an SRO hotel was the Queen's Hotel, whose residents were illegally evicted in 2015. SRO hotels function much like rooming houses in that they provide a room with shared facilities, but they are located in converted hotels. While SRO hotels do provide temporary accommodation, long-term tenancy is common.



28-30 Beaty Avenue. 17 dwelling rooms.



28 Maynard Avenue. 20 bachelorette units.



1521 Queen Street West. Former Queen's Hotel. 25 dwelling rooms.

3-5 SUPPORT SERVICE TYPOLOGIES

A wide range of service typologies exist across different types of rooming houses. Most private rooming houses provide no services to tenants, while others provide high levels of support including 24-hour staffing, boarding home services, meal programs, and mental health support.

Minimal Standard

The large majority of rooming houses operate at minimal standard. Unsubsidized private and non-profit rooming houses alike were found to provide few if any services. Basic services required by Building Services and the zoning by-law such as kitchen and bathroom facilities were minimal. Kitchen facilities in one building, for example, amounted to a hotplate and sink in a hallway adjoining the shared bathroom. The kitchen could not be used at the same time as the bathroom because one door was used to access both.

Habitat Services Program

There are 15 Habitat-funded homes in Parkdale, including Edmond Place. Habitat Services provides a subsidy to rooming house operators in exchange for the provision of boarding home services. Rooms are furnished with basic necessities, and there are higher standards for bathrooms, common spaces, and kitchens. In addition to this, a full meal plan is provided to tenants as well as toiletries and laundry supplies/services. Habitat-funded boarding homes are staffed 24 hours a day. A Habitat Residential Services Inspector is assigned to all homes receiving funding to monitor the standards and mediate tenant-landlord disputes. Housing Support Workers, provided by either Habitat Services or Cota, are present at minimum twice a week to provide social-recreational programming and individual support to tenants.

Alternative Service Standards

The remainder of the housing service typologies offer a range of the services described above. Examples include buildings operated by non-profits that provide services for men living with mental health challenges and co-occurring diabetes or pre-diabetic conditions; women aged 16-24 in school, employed or in employment programs; and First Nations families and children.

3-6 FINANCIAL OPERATING MODELS

There are a range of operating models for rooming houses.

Private Rooming House Operating Model

Private rooming houses are owned and operated entirely by private individuals. Although tenants may pay their rent through public assistance, owners have little contact with government agencies besides regular property inspections for licensed properties. Rents are set in a variety of ways, ranging from the base ODSP and OW housing allowance rates to market rents as high as \$1,300.

This study examined the rent rolls and gross and net operating incomes (obtained through a real estate agent's website) of six recently sold rooming house properties. These buildings were sold on the open market and were in full compliance with City regulations. The rents within these buildings ranged from \$566 to \$864 per dwelling room per month. These buildings paid between 20% and 30% of their gross income towards operating costs, which included taxes, water, hydro, gas, and insurance. The only property rent roll that included repairs and maintenance also had the highest operating cost (31.64% of gross income), suggesting that the actual operating costs may be closer to this amount. Licensed properties, especially those funded by Habitat Services, face higher maintenance and capital costs because of the more stringent requirements of the program/licencing.

Habitat Services Boarding Home Subsidy Model

The Habitat Services financial model provides a per-diem subsidy (in the form of a rental top-up) to landlords in exchange for the provision of meals and boarding home services. Because the home operator receives a subsidy, tenants' rental charges are more affordable and have remained fixed. The monthly rent rate for tenants receiving ODSP is \$543, and those receiving OW pay \$356. The home operator receives \$1,509 per month/per tenant, which includes the tenant's rent and the Habitat subsidy. Subsidy levels, determined by government funders, have not changed since 2012. Subsidy payments can be affected by vacancies and tenant absences.

Community Non-Profit Operating Model

Several non-profit agencies examined in this study operate rooming houses they do not own. Instead, a lease payment

for the entire property is paid directly to the landowner on behalf of all residents. Others have managed to acquire properties. Regardless of ownership, community non-profit incomes are typically made up of a diverse and complicated range of sources provided by different agencies and arms of the municipal and provincial governments as well as non-profit funders.

Agencies that operate largely on subsidies often do not have the capacity to establish a capital reserve fund and must therefore rely on one-time grants to provide these services. There are a series of grant programs at all three levels of government set up to provide capital repair funding for non-profit housing.

3-7 PUBLIC FUNDS SUPPORT PRIVATE OWNERS WITH NO PROTECTION OF INVESTMENT OR AFFORDABILITY

All privately owned rooming houses are, in a sense, subsidized housing, because public subsidies of some form provide the vast majority of their operating incomes. The amount of public money flowing into rooming houses is difficult to establish beyond a doubt, but our estimates, based on the most conservative figures, are astounding. Yet one central finding of this study is that this huge investment of public funds, as well as the relative affordability of rooming houses, is at risk if Parkdale's rooming houses continue to be sold on the private market where they are upscaled and converted.

While it is impossible to confidently establish how all rooming houses generate their income, our interviews with tenants and owners suggest that a majority of residents are on some form of income assistance such as ODSP, OW, or another allowance. In 2016 the maximum monthly shelter allowances for individuals were \$479 for ODSP recipients and \$374 for OW Recipients. (Those not on social assistance are typically low-income service workers, and are usually new immigrants to Canada.)

If we assume that 75% of Parkdale's 2,715 rooming house residents are on ODSP or OW and spend no more than their shelter allowance on housing, we can calculate that rooming house owners take in \$656,550 per month from these subsidies. This adds up to \$7,878,607 of public money paid to private landowners every year. A more realistic estimate based on existing rooming house rents in Parkdale (which range from \$350 to \$800 per month) yields significantly higher numbers. If we assume that 75% of rooming house residents pay the median rent of \$575 per month from social

"AT A STROKE, YEARS OF PUBLIC SUBSIDY, SCARCE AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS, AND ANY VALUE AND EQUITY THAT COULD HAVE BEEN IN COMMUNITY HANDS CAN BE LOST."

*– Lucas Van Meer Mass,
Research Coordinator, PNLT*

assistance benefits, that means \$9,457,618 in public subsidies annually for rooming house owners in Parkdale alone just through ODSP and OW.

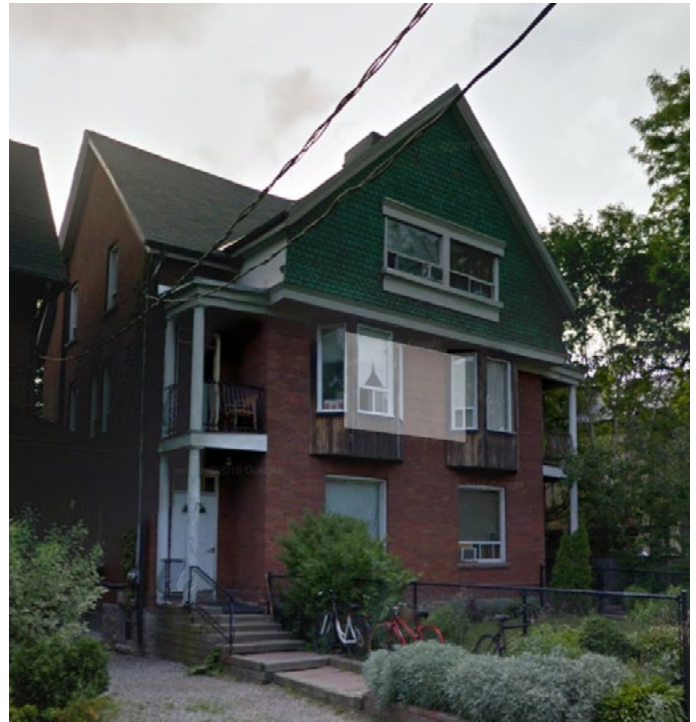
Many rooming house tenants also receive monthly rent allowances from the City of Toronto and Government of Ontario's joint Toronto Transitional Housing Allowance Program (TTHAP). The TTHAP is a housing allowance currently administered by the Province on behalf of the City of Toronto. The program provides rental subsidies of \$250-400 per month to eligible tenants in more than 3,600 households. It is targeted towards individuals participating in employment programs, who are homeless, or who are at risk of homelessness. Those entitled to TTHAP cannot receive any other housing allowance or rent-geared-to-income assistance, and must have a household income that is below a limit set by the City. According to the City of Toronto in April 2017, 219 housing allowances totalling \$72,850 were paid to residents in South Parkdale.

Income subsidies and housing allowances are not the only forms of public subsidy of rooming houses. In the City of Toronto, licensed rooming houses receive additional indirect subsidization through tax benefit, as they are taxed as residential properties rather than commercial properties, providing a tax break of between 22-69%. Many private rooming house landlords have also received significant funds through the federal government's now discontinued Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP). The RRAP operated until 2012, and offered homeowners providing low-income housing with financial assistance for repairs and renovations. As part of the program's Rooming

House component, licensed Toronto landlords could receive up to \$16,000 per dwelling room in forgivable loans for safety improvements, so long as the rents they charged were below CMHC's median market rates for the city. A 2010 City of Toronto report recommended that RRAP investment in Toronto be extended and enhanced due to "its positive impact in supporting housing renovation and renewal and economic activity" (City of Toronto, 2010). As of 2010, \$8 million in funding was provided annually to Toronto households through various RRAP programs, however the initiative was cancelled by the federal government in 2012.

While they may be considered subsidized, rooming houses are not always "affordable"—affordable housing, according to CMHC, requires 30% or less of a person's monthly before-tax income. Assuming again a median rent of \$575, rooming house tenants receiving the full OW benefit of \$681 per month or full ODSP benefit of \$1,110 spend between 52% and 84% of their income on rent. Many do not receive the full allowance and pay an even higher percentage. Still, rooming houses are often the most accessible and affordable form of housing for those with the lowest incomes. This means that tenants have little, if any, disposable income left for food after rent is paid. This economic truth and the reality that rooming houses sometimes lack adequate food preparation and/or storage amenities forces many residents to rely on food and meal programs provided by non-profit agencies such as PARC, the Parkdale Community Food Bank, and St Francis Table.

These external, direct and indirect public-sector subsidies have played an increasingly integral part in supporting the private operation of rooming houses. But they have not grown at the same pace as the market, putting the once financially viable private rooming house at risk. Private rooming houses can be sold at the owner's discretion, meaning that at the stroke of a pen years of public subsidy, scarce affordable housing units, and any value and equity that could have been in community hands can be lost.



28-30 Beaty Ave. is a 17 unit licensed rooming house. In 2006 this site received \$286,666 from CMHC through the RRAP program. This property was put up for sale in 2016 for \$2,780,000 and is considered at-risk of being lost.

04 Rooming House Loss, Upscaling & Conversion



198
ROOMING
HOUSES

59
AT RISK
OF LOSS

28
ALREADY
LOST



HOUSING
2,715
PEOPLE

HOUSING
818
PEOPLE

DE-HOUSING
347
PEOPLE

Key findings include:

1. Neighbourhood change and real estate speculation, while not the only contributing factors, are the leading causes of rooming house loss through upscaling and/or conversion.
2. 28 private rooming houses have been lost in the last 10 years.
3. 59 more private rooming houses are at risk, jeopardizing the housing stability and health of over 800 people.
4. Bachelorette buildings in particular are at imminent risk.
5. Currently no effective policy frameworks are in place to preserve rooming houses or their affordability.

4-1 ROOMING HOUSE LOSS

Our study confirmed that 28 former rooming houses had been upscaled or converted over the past decade to other uses including single-family homes, Airbnb rentals, and higher-priced rental apartments. Anecdotal evidence suggests that several of these properties are retaining their rooming house licences even though they are now operating as self-contained, market-rate apartments. This is likely because, legally speaking, many of the micro-units in these buildings are only allowable in licensed rooming houses. Additionally, licensed rooming houses receive a tax benefit, as they are taxed as residential properties rather than commercial properties. The loss of these 28 rooming houses displaced an estimated 347 residents. This is a conservative estimate, and the true number of people displaced by rooming house loss is higher, as we did not capture data for unlicensed rooming houses that were converted before our study began.

4-2 PROPERTIES AT RISK OF UPSCALING & CONVERSION

The study identified multiple factors that put rooming houses at risk of loss through upscaling and conversion. We identified 59 rooming houses—28% of all rooming houses in Parkdale—as currently at risk of conversion due to one or more factors. That represents a tremendous and unpredictable threat to the housing stability and wellbeing of 818 vulnerable residents.

AT RISK ROOMING HOUSES

March 2017



Sources: Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust, City of Toronto, Statistics Canada.

**PARKDALE HAS 59 ROOMING HOUSES
AT RISK TO UPSCALING AND CONVERSION,
PUTTING 818 RESIDENTS AT RISK OF
DISPLACEMENT.**

The rationale for identifying at-risk properties was as follows:

- **Rooming House Bachelorettes With 10 Or More Legal Units:** The study identified all bachelorette rooming houses with 10 or more legal units as at risk because of their potential to be upscaled and/or converted to higher-income-yielding rental properties. Most rooming houses that have come up for sale in the past three years fall into this category.
- **Recently Sold Or For Sale:** Buildings that have recently been sold are likely to be upscaled and/or converted as owners seek to increase the rent yield of their property investment or to occupy the building as a single-family home.
- **Landowner Confirmed Interest In Selling Property:** Upon sale, a building is at risk of upscaling and/or conversion.
- **Reports Of Evictions:** Evictions indicate that a building is being vacated either for sale or for renovation and upscaling.

Upscaling of Bachelorette Rooming Houses

As the economic tides of Parkdale continue to shift with increasing gentrification, Parkdale's rooming houses face new challenges to their existence. The Parkdale Rooming House Study has uncovered a new and concerning trend. "Upscaling gentrification," previously well documented in Parkdale's larger mid- and high-rise apartment buildings, is now impacting the community's rooming houses by converting them to higher-income rental housing. Specifically, properties with high numbers of bachelorette units are systematically being sold and then upscaled out of affordability.

"WHY IS THE CITY UNAWARE OF THIS? BECAUSE THEY DON'T WANT TO KNOW. KNOWING COMES WITH REAL RESPONSIBILITY."

- Lynne Sky, Community-Based Researcher

To understand the significance of this trend we must look at the unique history of Parkdale's rooming house bachelorette buildings. From the 1950s to 1970s independent developers began building and operating purpose-built rooming houses that contained "bachelorette" units. These bachelorette properties, typically three-story buildings, could accommodate more units than a converted single-family home. Initially these buildings offered only single rooms with shared amenities, but gradually many units were outfitted with basic kitchenette and bathroom facilities. By the late 1980s, driven by deinstitutionalization and a low vacancy rate, the stock in Parkdale had grown to an estimated 120 bachelorette buildings with some 1,200 units, making up

Converted Rooming Houses				
Type of Building	Number of Buildings	Number of Residents Confirmed	Sites Without Resident Data	Total Former Population of Converted Rooming Houses*
Total	28	170	13	347

At-Risk Properties				
Reason for Risk	Number of Buildings Subject to Risk	Number of Residents Confirmed	Sites Without Resident Data	Total Estimated Number of Residents at Risk of Housing Loss*
Bachelorette w/ 10 or more units	36	540	-	540
Sale Imminent / Lease Ending	15	153	3	194
Evictions	3	20	2	47
Licensing Compliance Issues	5	24	1	38
Total	59	737		818

13% of Parkdale's rental housing stock. Throughout the 1990s, the City was under significant pressure from residents associations and tenant advocacy organizations to further regulate rooming houses in Parkdale. In 1998 the City launched a year-long conflict mediation process involving tenants, landlords, homeowners, and social service providers. The Parkdale Pilot Project was the culmination of this conflict resolution process. The project was meant to be the vehicle for implementing recommendations including:

- Licensing bachelorette buildings, pre-1978, post-1978, and post-1996, according to the agreed-upon standards;
- Minimizing and dealing with any cases of tenant relocation; and
- Ensuring ongoing maintenance and standards.

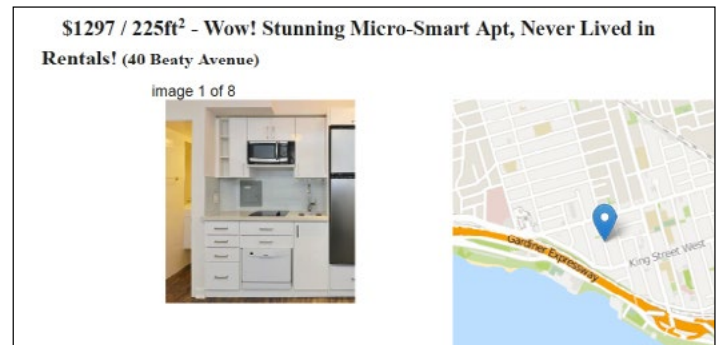
The project was fully operational for three years, during which time 96 properties and 800 units were legalized or "regularized" through site-specific rezoning. Regularization ensured firstly that these properties were inspected and that safety concerns were addressed. It also allowed legally non-conforming properties to continue to operate. Owners benefited greatly from regularization because they could continue to operate often high-income-yielding rental properties, while avoiding the potentially substantial cost of renovating their buildings to bring them into full compliance. Most importantly, rooming house tenants continued to have access to much-needed affordable housing. Unfortunately, while a major rationale presented by City planners for approving site-specific rezonings was to provide "much needed, safe affordable housing," the process neglected to put in place substantial legally-binding protections for the affordability of the housing in the long-term. One fatal assumption of planners of that era may have been that small bachelorette rooming house units were too small and/or stigmatized to be gentrified. History is proving that without legally binding protections in place, all affordable housing is vulnerable to speculation.

This study has identified a number of bachelorette buildings that have been sold in recent years to a new class of real estate investor, who have little interest in operating affordable housing. Rather, they view these properties as attractive investment opportunities because of their potential for high revenue after upscaling. The study team documented several examples of rents in these buildings increasing dramatically, in some cases doubling within one year, after their sale.

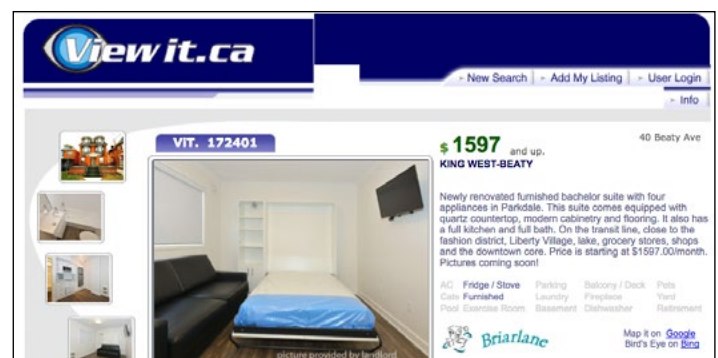
The two images to the right—of Craigslist and Viewit.ca posts advertising renovated units at 40 Beaty for \$1,297 and

\$1597 in late 2016 and early 2017 respectively—exemplify the trend. Before its sale, 40 Beaty was a licensed bachelorette rooming house with 26 units averaging a monthly rent of \$767. Many of the tenants were low-income, long-term residents, some of whom were on fixed incomes such as ODSP. While it was for sale in 2016 (eventually selling for \$3.175M), an advertisement read "Upgraded Investment Property in Gentrifying South Parkdale... Moderate Rents With Upside Potential In Rapidly Increasing Rental Area." The property was marketed for its potential to be gentrified, and that's just what the owners have done. The new class of real estate investors have begun upscaling units as they become vacant and aggressively increasing the rents, so that new units are now out of reach to low-income residents. By our estimates, rents in the units pictured below have increased 69% and 108% respectively.

It should be noted that rooming house properties such as 40 Beaty are increasingly being listed for sale well above their value within their current use. Normally, multi-unit residential property values are matched to the revenues that a property can reasonably generate. New owners who purchase rooming houses at exorbitant prices are undoubtedly locking themselves into business plans that depend on increasing rents, at the expense of low-income residents.



Craigslist ad posted in late 2016.



Viewit.ca ad posted April 3, 2017.

The Upscaling Of A Rooming House

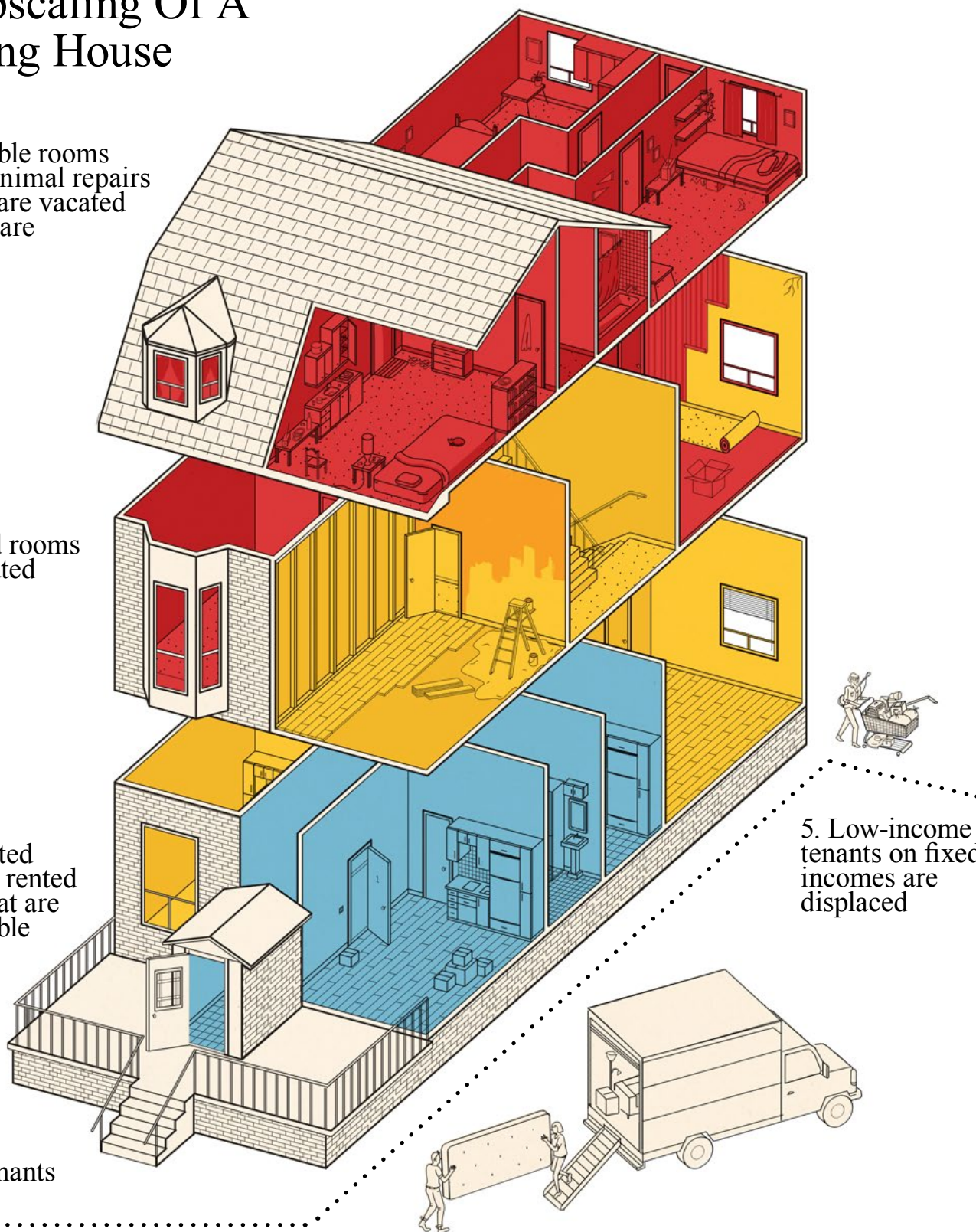
1. Affordable rooms
receive minimal repairs
until they are vacated
or tenants are
evicted

2. Vacated rooms
are renovated

3. Renovated
rooms are rented
at rates that are
unaffordable
to tenants
on fixed
incomes

4. Higher
income tenants
move in

5. Low-income
tenants on fixed
incomes are
displaced



“Upscaling Gentrification”

Upscaling gentrification is a process in which landlords aggressively increase rents to make up for a perceived gap between what tenants are currently paying and what other, often higher-income tenants, might be willing to pay.

In practice, upscaling gentrification sees landlords try to push out long-term tenants whose rents are low by pursuing above-guideline rent increases. In some cases they pay out long-term tenants to walk away from their leases, or even evict them under false pretenses. Then they renovate and “upscale” any unit that becomes vacant, exploiting Ontario’s vacancy decontrol regulations that allow unlimited rent increases when a tenant leaves.

The unfortunate result of upscaling gentrification is the displacement of low-income tenants. In recent years, tenants in Parkdale’s large apartment buildings have mobilized under the banner of Parkdale Organize to push back against upscaling gentrification through protests and legal action. No such organizing has yet emerged around rooming houses.



40 Beaty Avenue. 27 units. Sold in 2016 for \$3,175,000.

“25 Self-Contained Apartments And 2 Unit Coach House, Well-Maintained And Upgraded Investment Property In Gentrifying South Parkdale, 39' X 158' Lot, Steps To Queen St. West And Roncesvalles...Moderate Rents With Upside Potential In Rapidly Increasing Rental Area.”

Local Sales Representative

Marketing Gentrification

A major contributing factor to the increase in the upscaling of bachelorette rooming houses is the aggressive marketing of these buildings by realtors as lucrative investment opportunities. The quotes on this page, which appeared in property sale listings released by realtors in the past two years, are emblematic of a strategy of specifically marketing the profitability of gentrifying these affordable housing properties. When PNLT staff met with realtor Nick Brewerton, he confirmed that Parkdale’s unique stock of bachelorette buildings represent highly profitable investment properties. Brewerton further identified that there is currently a transition in the rental sector in Parkdale, by which older rooming house owners who saw themselves as affordable housing providers are selling off their properties to a younger class of real estate investor. New owners have little interest in affordable housing and rather seek high returns on their investments.



28 Maynard Avenue. 20 units. Sold for \$2,190,000.

“Rarely Available, Affordable, Lucrative Investment Opportunity In Downtown Toronto. 20 Bachelor Suites, Purpose Built Residential Rental Apartment Building. Very Reasonable Price/Suite! Great Returns And Cap Rate (Especially For Downtown Toronto)! Incredible Upside Potential! Presently Only About 5 Of The Units Are Even Close To Market Rents. Very Real Opportunity To Increase Noi By \$40,000! Increase Value By Over \$1,000,000!!!”

Local Sales Representative

TENANT STORY

There's No Place For Us To Go

March 24, 2017



116 Spencer Avenue. 35 units. For sale in 2017 for 5,100,000.

“35 Self-Contained Licensed Apartments in Well-Maintained And Upgraded Investment Property, 5 X 1-Bdrms, 30 X Bachelors. 60' / 112' Lot In Gentrifying South Parkdale Location Near Liberty Village...Moderate Rents With Upside in Rapidly Increasing Rental Area.”

Local Sales Representative

I moved into [116 Spencer Avenue] around 2008. It's been pretty okay. Our current landlord, who's leaving now, has actually been a good, mid-range kind of landlord. When something's broken, you can get it fixed.

When I first moved here, this was not the nicest of buildings. There were people living here that were very angry. A lot of substance abuse. But slowly, over time, it's gotten great. A core group of us have been here a long time now. We're pretty close-knit. So when we saw the “For Sale” signs go up in December, we all started calling each other and saying, “There's something going on.” Right now, we're forming a tenants' association, because if there are problems, if it comes to a point where the new landlord tries to evict us, we want to act as a group.

Hopefully, the new landlord who takes over will just run the building the way it's always been, and make money on any new apartments that open up. But we're worried he's not going to do that. It's fine that new people want to buy the building and make a profit. That's all great. It's just we're worried they'll want to make big changes and raise our rents really high. If that happens, there's no place for us to go.

I don't have a job right now. I was in a car accident. So I have nothing coming in right now. I'm barely hanging on. And there are some older people who have lived here for more than 20 years. They're pensioners, or they're low-income people. I'm really worried about them too. I don't know where any of us would end up if we had to move.

TENANT STORY

They're Pushing Us Out

April 2017

My name is Dick Kelly. I live at 22 Maynard Avenue, which is a small building, thirty-six units, all bachelors. There's been a lot of uncertainty since the building was put up for sale. The guy that does the yard work, he's the superintendent's son; he said, "Don't worry about it. They just put that out there to test the waters." But I don't know. I'm thinking maybe I'm okay, but I would like to know for sure. I mean, I was homeless for over a year and a half, and I don't want to go through that again.

I've lived in Parkdale most of my life. For twenty-five years I lived at the corner of Tyndall and Springhurst. And Parkdale's convenient, everything's within walking distance. The food store, the liquor store, the library, it's all right here. But they're pushing us out. You have companies like Akelius who buy a building, put in some new balconies and then say that rents will be jumping three hundred bucks. Or what if our place gets purchased and the new owners say they want it for their own use?

I hope everything just carries on. I'm hoping I'm protected, I have a lease. But a lot of others don't, and I'm sitting here thinking, "where are these people going to go?" If someone is willing to spend a million and a half dollars on a run-down piece of shit like ours, and then reno it with another half a million dollars, we're all SOL.



22 Maynard Avenue. 36 units. For sale in 2017 for \$6,000,000.00

4-3 CONTRIBUTING FACTORS OF ROOMING HOUSE LOSS

The Rooming House Study has found a challenging combination of pressures facing the long-term viability of rooming house stock. We conclude that, while rooming house losses may have already started, a combination of market pressures and incentives, an absence of legislative protection, and operational issues is likely to accelerate the pace of loss in the coming years. In brief, our findings identify the problems facing the viability of rooming houses as follows:

- **Market Pressure**
 - Increased value of existing housing stock is compelling owners to sell or convert properties.
 - New higher-density development is imminent and will place further pressure on existing rooming house stock, while also jeopardizing the potential for a community-led development response.
- **Policy Limitations**
 - The licensing regime does not provide any incentive or requirement to maintain buildings as rooming houses.
 - No affordability protections exist.
 - Legislative protections against rental housing conversion do not protect rooming houses.
- **Operational Constraints**
 - The costs of operating rooming houses are increasing at a higher rate than social assistance and subsidy rates, which generate most of a rooming house's income.
 - Many older rooming house owners are considering selling their properties due to capacity issues.

Market Pressure

The process of gentrification in Parkdale over the past two decades has been gradual but unmistakable. It has been characterized by the middle-class acquisition of desirable Victorian single-family housing, the disappearance of local businesses that support the needs of existing low-income residents, and, most recently, the corporate acquisition and renovation of large-scale rental buildings.

To understand why this is happening, we need to understand the market forces at play in downtown Toronto. Parkdale property prices have risen in step with the city's average increase of 10% year over year, but have historically been

low compared to the city's other 19th-century downtown neighbourhoods. Individual and corporate interest in investment was dampened by neglect and disinvestment in the building stock, the stigma associated with the area's crime, mental health and addictions issues, and low-rent-yield uses such as rooming houses.

In recent years the widening gap between property values and the potential sale value or rent yield of renovated properties, combined with the increased competitiveness of other 19th-century downtown neighbourhoods, has made the prospect of investment more attractive. The Parkdale Planning Project found that 90% of residents in South Parkdale rent their accommodations. The potential rent-yields of renovated housing stock now outweigh any risks associated with neighbourhood stigma and the costs of renovation. The same rationale holds true for the conversion of rental properties to non-rental uses. This is forecasted to continue.

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

HOME OF THE WEEK

Pet-friendly in Parkdale



The front exterior of lawyer Kim Schofield's Parkdale home.
JENNIFER ROBERTS/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Two lawyers slowly transform a former rooming house into a single-family home

The Globe and Mail. February 15, 2017

Affordable options are disappearing due to lack of housing stock options. The majority of Parkdale's housing stock dates from before 1960. As these Victorian homes and larger-scale rental buildings reach their age of obsolescence and existing tenants are expelled, there is no local housing stock to absorb those displaced by renovation and redevelopment. The types of conversions taking place vary significantly. Some buildings are reconverted to single-family homes or larger-scale and higher-cost rental apartments. Others have been remarketed as Airbnb short-term rentals while others have become retirement homes, which share many rooming house characteristics but are less problematic to maintain and have higher yields.

Market Pressures: New Development

Parkdale has remained nearly untouched by large-scale new development despite a downtown Toronto condo boom almost unparalleled in North America. This is likely to change in the near future. Parkdale has reached the \$600 per ft² sale price threshold developers typically need to justify a new project. There are active development applications at 6 Noble Street, 57 Brock Avenue, and 1182 and 1220 King Street West. Approved developments in the adjacent neighbourhood of Beaconsfield demonstrate a strong market demand for new condos. There are 247 units scheduled for completion in 2016–2017. Significant development has also occurred near the intersection of Sorauren Avenue and Dundas Street.

Major corridors within Parkdale are likely to represent attractive development opportunities in the coming years. The PNLT has tracked large lots and evidence of major land assemblies.

Policy Limitations

Licensing

The current rooming house licensing regime is a product of the former City of Toronto's 1974 licensing efforts. The licensing process focuses on rooming house compliance with regulations and standards laid out by the Toronto Police Services, Toronto Fire Services, Toronto Public Health, the City's By-law Enforcement unit, and the City's Building Services.

Toronto City Council has delegated its powers to consider applications for new licences and the renewal of existing licences for rooming houses to a Rooming House Licensing

Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner. The commissioners have the power to suspend, renew, or revoke any rooming house licence and may place conditions on rooming house owners as a condition of the issuance of a licence. Licences are issued on a one- or two-year basis and the landowner must demonstrate that they have received the approval of all relevant agencies.

In the event that a landowner possessing a licence is found not in compliance with the City's standards, or the City has received complaints about the property, the owner may be subject to a Licensing Commissioner hearing. At the hearing the owner is required to demonstrate that they have, or are in the process of, remediating issues that led to complaints or to non-compliance with City standards. The Licensing Commissioner may then either suspend or issue with conditions the rooming house licence. This study found that while rooming house licensing may play an important role in enhancing the safety and security standards of rooming houses in Parkdale, its role in protecting rooming houses from conversion is negligible. In our analysis of licensed properties from 1996 to the present, we found many properties that fluctuated between being licensed and unlicensed year over year. Many of the once-licensed properties still operate as rooming houses but without licences.

The problem lies in the tension between the City's goal of improving safety and security through licensing and its goal of preserving affordable housing stock and avoiding increases to homelessness. Given the history of catastrophic fires in rooming houses, the City's concern for safety and security has been paramount. Licensed properties are required to permit City inspectors to access their properties and are therefore in a better position to ensure that the necessary safety measures are in place. However, this study's evidence suggests that the City is reluctant to issue and enforce strong or punitive orders against landowners that would discourage their involvement in the licensing program, let alone to revoke licences, shut down rooming houses, and exacerbate the city's homelessness problem. Anecdotally, the study learned of an absence of staff dedicated to rooming house inspection as well as inconsistency between inspectors.

Despite the assurances of increased safety and security that licensing provides, anecdotal evidence collected in the course of this study suggests that there is no strong correlation between whether a property is licensed or not and the quality of life of residents. Some of Parkdale's most poorly maintained rooming houses are licensed by the City.

Residents interviewed for this study have described several egregious safety failings in licensed buildings, including permanently blocked exits and windows.

Absence of Rental Protection Policies

The City of Toronto has a policy in place to protect larger-scale rental properties from conversion or demolition. The Rental Housing Demolition and Conversion Control By-law protects buildings with six or more dwelling units from conversion or demolition, unless the owner is able to replace those units elsewhere. However, this policy does not apply to rooming house properties because of a difference in the language used to describe rental apartments and rooming house rooms. Councillors Mike Layton (Ward 19) and Gord Perks (Ward 14) introduced motions to change this policy in a previous session of Council but were unsuccessful. More recently, motions put forward in response to the eviction of residents from the Palace Arms Hotel at King Street West and Strachan Avenue have attempted to incorporate protections for Single Room Occupancy (SRO) units, but the policy explicitly excludes dwelling rooms in converted houses with fewer than 15 units. These criteria describe the majority of rooming house properties in Parkdale.

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

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Last call at the Palace Arms: Developers covet the King West property, but where will its poor tenants go?

ARTHUR WHITE
Special to The Globe and Mail
Published Friday, Jun. 26, 2015 5:42PM EDT
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18 Comments



The Globe and Mail. Jun. 26, 2015.

The consequence of this policy has been that landowners are able to evict tenants from rooming house properties, whether licensed or unlicensed, with greater impunity than they would have were the building to contain self-contained rental units. A prime example of such an action was the eviction of 25 tenants from the Queen's Hotel at 1521 Queen Street West in 2015.

Operational Constraints

The study team spoke to 12 rooming house landowners, 10 of whom owned more than one property in Parkdale and eight of whom participated in the Habitat Services program. Most of these landowners spoke about the difficulty of operating rooming houses and the diminishing feasibility of providing rooming house housing.

The most significant pressure facing rooming house owners is the growing discrepancy between subsidy rates and costs. Nearly all of the owners interviewed spoke of the difficulty of maintaining profitability when social assistance rates and Habitat subsidies (where applicable) remain stagnant. In non-subsidized rooming houses, social assistance funds such as ODSP, OW, and OAS form the bulk of the rental income. Property owners are therefore unable to change rental rates to reflect increases in cost. Landowners participating in the Habitat Services program receive a much higher income per resident, but were also subject to increases in a wider variety of costs, including food and labour.

The cost increase most frequently cited was hydroelectricity. While hydro cost increase estimates vary according to how they are calculated, the consensus is that they are increasing at a rapid rate. Statistics Canada, for example, found that Ontario households paid 15.4% more for electricity in May 2016 than they did in the same month the year prior. Hydro costs are also higher in rooming houses due to the larger number of residents and the duration of the time they typically spend at home.

Owners also cited increased taxes as a major cost. The Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) assessment rate of rooming house properties, based on the presumed highest and best use or resale value of the property, has increased for single-family homes in Parkdale by 10% year over year, but rooming house operators are largely unable to increase rents to reflect costs.

Rooming houses provide shelter to many people with significant mental health, trauma, and addiction issues, and this can lead to increased wear and tear on properties.

Residents are sometimes not equipped to properly maintain their living spaces and common areas or may damage properties during periods of crisis. Maintenance costs are therefore significantly higher in rooming house properties than in a typical market rental building.

On the revenue side of the equation, public assistance rates have grown at a much lower rate than costs. OW and ODSP rates increased only from \$681 to \$706 for singles on OW and from \$1,110 to \$1,128 for those on ODSP as of September 2016, with shelter allowances remaining stagnant at \$376 and \$479 respectively.

Many landowners described the significant time and effort involved in operating rooming houses compared to typical market units. Many relied on family networks to provide maintenance and oversight of buildings. When these positions were paid, the rate of pay was low, leading to high turnover and difficulty in attracting qualified applicants. One landowner expressed their preference for operating retirement homes, which have similar demands but are subject to less damage than a rooming house.

Aging Ownership

Many rooming house operators are reaching, or are well into, retirement age. In the absence of a family willing to take over the business, or in the event of the owner's death, some rooming houses are being sold and converted. Many of the landowners in Parkdale are of the 1960s and 1970s generation of immigrants to Canada and are now in their seventies and eighties. Without clear succession planning in place, rooming houses are at risk of sale and conversion when these owners decide to divest themselves of their properties.



17 Laxton is a former 12 unit boarding home. The site has since been converted into a single family home after the previous owner passed away and relatives sold the building.



Fire Marshal to investigate Parkdale rooming house fire

BY NEWS STAFF
POSTED JAN 26, 2016 4:07 PM EDT

LOCAL



79 Wilson Park Rd. is a former unlicensed Rooming House that is now vacant after fire in 2016.

Building-Specific Contexts

In addition to the systemic issues discussed above, rooming house residents are subject to a host of day-to-day risks to the safety and security of their housing. The risks are diverse, but ultimately relate to the lack of housing options available to very low-income people, and the absence of protection of their rights as tenants under existing policy and legislation. People involved in the drug trade or prostitution sometimes establish control over a portion of a house and bring in uninvited guests and unwanted activity. Residents report being subject to the unpredictable whims of landowners, such as illegal evictions or sudden changes in living conditions, but have little capacity or grounds for recourse to tenant protection measures. Bug infestations are endemic and fires represent a constant risk. This study documented one case where a bedbug infestation was left purposely unaddressed by the landowner to the point where residents were compelled to leave. Residents reported that the landlord was allowing the infestation to force tenants out without having to go through normal eviction procedures, and thereby allowing the building to be renovated and the rent raised.

05 Eviction & Displacement



Key findings include:

1. Rooming house upscaling & conversion is causing an eviction crisis.
 2. Both legal & illegal evictions are common.
 3. While most rooming house tenants are protected under the Residential Tenancies Act, many are unaware of their rights or do not have the desire or capacity to contest their eviction to the full extent of the law.
 4. Many rooming house tenants live in fear of eviction.
 5. Many evicted tenants are displaced from Parkdale, losing access to its community and social services. Some become homeless. Some evictions lead to tragedies.
-

5-1 EVICTIONS IN ROOMING HOUSES

The study has found that the upscaling and conversion of rooming houses almost always triggers the eviction and displacement of rooming house tenants. While the Residential Tenancies Act outlines a formal eviction process that should protect most tenants, in practice both legal and illegal rooming house evictions occur. As the mass eviction of tenants from the Queen's Hotel in August 2015 demonstrated, even when tenants know their rights and have the capacity to contest eviction, a landlord's aggressive and alarming tactics mean the law may only serve to punish the landlord after the fact. Although the City and WoodGreen Community Services have an emergency eviction response protocol, evictions often result in residents being displaced from Parkdale and its community and social supports, or becoming homeless. At best a destabilizing event, eviction can at worst have tragic consequences for the most vulnerable members of our community.

The Formal Eviction Process

Most rooming house tenants are afforded the same protections of the Residential Tenancies Act as renters of private dwellings. The only exception is if the owner of the property shares a bathroom or kitchen with the tenant. As such, tenants have the right to the same eviction proceedings as any other tenant as long as the tenant can prove tenancy by demonstrating that they have paid rent.

The first step towards a legal eviction occurs when the landowner formally files a notice with the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB). The notice is either a statement that the tenant has not paid rent (known as the N4 notice), which leads to an L1 eviction proceeding, or the filing of notices for other reasons, listed below, which lead to an L2 eviction proceeding. L2 proceeding notices for eviction are:

- Notice N5: Notice to End your Tenancy for Interfering with Others, Damage or Overcrowding
- Notice N6: Notice to End your Tenancy for Illegal Acts or Misrepresenting Income in a Rent-Geared-to-Income Rental Unit
- Notice N7: Notice to End your Tenancy for Causing Serious Problems in the Rental Unit or Residential Complex
- Notice N8: Notice to End your Tenancy at the End of the Term
- Notice N12: Notice to End your Tenancy Because the Landlord, a Purchaser or a Family Member Requires the Rental Unit

IN THE COURSE OF LEGAL EVICTION PROCEEDINGS, MANY TENANTS ARE UNAWARE OF THEIR RIGHTS UNDER THE RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES ACT OR DO NOT HAVE THE DESIRE OR CAPACITY TO CONTEST THEIR EVICTION TO THE FULL EXTENT OF THE LAW.

- Notice N13: Notice to End your Tenancy Because the Landlord Wants to Demolish the Rental Unit, Repair it or Convert it to Another Use.

For each of the reasons for eviction, different waiting periods apply for the time between the filing of the notice and the filing of an L1 or L2 application to evict. After that time has transpired, the landlord can file an L1 or L2 notice, which is a formal application to evict the tenant. Three to six weeks after the L1 or L2 notice is filed, a hearing at the LTB will be held. If the LTB finds in favour of the landowner, it will issue an order to evict that is valid 11 days after it is issued. The landlord must then take this order to the Sheriff, who will schedule an eviction date in one to two weeks. Up until the posting of the Sheriff's notice 10 days prior to eviction, the tenant can stop the proceedings by paying all rent in arrears, if this is the cause of the eviction.

If a N13 Notice is issued, landlords must give tenants 120 days notice, offer them three months' rent, or, in buildings with more than five units, provide them with the option of moving into another rental unit. Tenants must be offered the right of first refusal, allowing them to reoccupy units post-renovation at the same rental rate paid previously. However, as our research shows, many evicted tenants are not made aware of this right. Landlords often issue N13 Notices in order to convert units into more expensive forms of housing, and once renovated they are neither offered to former residents, nor affordable to them. Under Toronto's Residential Rental Property Demolition and Conversion

Control By-law (2007), if a property with at least six dwelling units is either significantly renovated or demolished, individual rental units must be replaced. While bachelorettes, defined by the city as “units,” are protected under this legislation, rooming house rentals, as “rooms” are not. Furthermore, if tenants have already been evicted from eligible units, due the Residential Tenancies Act’s Vacancy Decontrol measure the City has no power to prevent landlords from significantly raising rents.

Discussions with social service workers and housing advocates suggest that landlords frequently do not follow the full legal process of eviction described above. Tenants are sometimes presented with a notice of intent to evict and assume that it represents a formal requirement to move. Sometimes landlords do not actually submit the notice to the LTB and simply present a filled-out but unsubmitted copy. In other cases, the documentation has been filed incorrectly by the landlord and, if this issue is raised by the tenant or an advocate at the LTB hearing, the process must be started anew. Sometimes the notices of eviction are entirely unofficial, and therefore legally unenforceable. Unfortunately it is not uncommon for tenants to follow these unofficial documents and leave their housing. With regards to L2 eviction proceedings, tenants also have greater latitude for contesting the reason for the eviction application. Organizations such as Parkdale Community Legal Services, and Parkdale Organize and other local tenant groups, primarily located in larger corporate-owned properties, have successfully contested many eviction orders, or rental increase orders, which must go through the same process.

LANDLORDS HAVE BEEN REPORTED TO HAVE USED PHYSICAL AND VERBAL INTIMIDATION TO EVICT TENANTS.

Our research suggests that in the course of legal eviction proceedings, many tenants are often unaware of their rights under the Residential Tenancies Act or do not have the desire or capacity to contest their eviction to the full extent that the law permits. Some accept their evictions as inevitable when presented with eviction notices, while others have had fraught relationships with their landlords and feel either powerless or endangered by the prospect of challenging the landlord’s will. This finding suggests that there is a need for increased tenants’ rights education and support for rooming house tenants.

Contested or Unlawful Evictions

Unlawful evictions also occur with significant frequency in Parkdale rooming houses. In these cases, lack of understanding about formal proceedings and rights, lack of capacity, or feelings of powerlessness or intimidation often allow the eviction to proceed uncontested. Landlords have been reported to have used physical and verbal intimidation to evict tenants and to have changed locks and disposed of property without having gone through the necessary steps.



Robert Keith Irving carrying his mattress down Queen Street as part of Queens Hotel Eviction in August 2015

Notice to Hotel Guests

On behalf of BSAR (Queen) Ltd., management wishes to inform those of you that have not already been made aware as to the fact that The Roncey Hotel will officially be closed for renovations as at 11:00 a.m. on the 7th of August, 2015 (the "Closing Time"). Accordingly, weekly renewals of the hotel tariff agreements will not be considered beyond the Closing Time and the suites must be vacated prior to the Closing Time. There will be absolutely no exceptions made. Those of you that have not as yet made alternative arrangements should do so immediately. The contents of all rooms will be removed forthwith following the Closing Time if they have not been removed prior. Some of you have specific alternative arrangements for earlier departure dates via specific agreements with management; please be advised that the earlier departure dates will be enforced in such cases. In the mean time, please be cognisant of the rules and regulations that are clearly posted in the common areas of the hotel. Any deviation from same will result in the immediate termination of your stay. We thank you for your patronage and apologize for any inconvenience caused by the renovation, which I trust you all understand is absolutely necessary. We look forward to completing the renovations in a timely manner and to hopefully seeing some of you back in the new and improved Roncey Hotel upon completion.

The situation escalated when the Toronto Police Service (TPS) assisted in the eviction of two tenants at the owner's request. PCLS issued a letter to TPS arguing that the evictions were illegal and recommended it cease assistance with the evictions. This did little to avert the situation. Only 22 hours before the time of eviction, Robert Keith Irving, pictured on the previous page, returned to his room to find his door unlocked and locks changed. He was forced to carry his mattress and belongings along Queen Street to the safety of a friend's house, before attending an emergency relocation meeting at PCLS.

On August 7, 2015, the evictions took place without the participation of a sheriff. Local politicians including MPP Cheri DiNovo

Often those with the capacity to assist vulnerable tenants are unaware of the situation until it is too late.

Parkdale experienced a significant contested eviction in August 2015, when 25 tenants were evicted with seven days notice from the Queen's Hotel at 1521 Queen Street West. The property is a 13,000 ft² commercial and residential building that was purchased in 2015 by BSAR Development Group Inc., a boutique condominium developer. Before this, the property had operated for years as a licensed rooming house until in 2011 the City denied a 40-unit rooming house license. The former owners continued to operate until defaulting on a mortgage and losing the building.

Soon after BSAR purchased the building the tenants, many of whom had been paying monthly rent directly to the landlord through ODSP for upwards of four years, were unexpectedly issued informal seven-day notices of eviction on the pretence that the building was operating as a hotel and thus not protected by the RTA. The staff of Parkdale-Activity Recreation Centre and Parkdale Community Legal Services (PCLS) were informed of the evictions and immediately mobilized a response to support the tenants and fight the eviction. Throughout the week leading up to the eviction, tenants reported being harassed and intimidated. Doors were removed from common bathrooms, and tenants returned home to find the doors of their private rooms unlocked and locks changed. As one resident stated, "The developer has directly threatened us all... he evicted a sick person a day before she went into surgery... I can't find five minutes of peace in my own home."

spoke out, stating, "I'm here to support the tenants that are being evicted. These are not hotel guests, these are low-income people who have lived here, some of them for years. This is completely illegal."

The emergency response protocol for rooming house evictions administered by the City of Toronto and WoodGreen Community Services was initiated, and several tenants were temporarily housed in hotels for eight weeks until receiving rent allowances to assist in their long-term relocation. According to the City of Toronto, it costs the City up to \$20,400 per person to provide emergency eviction response and relocation. This includes 18 months of housing help and follow-up, a moving allowance and housing allowances.

BSAR (Queen) Ltd. was subsequently charged under the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, and plead guilty to four counts of unlawfully recovering possession of a rental unit on September 19, 2016. While this unlawful eviction cost the tenants their home and taxpayers upwards of \$100,000 for the emergency response, the corporation was only fined a total of \$14,000.

The net result is that 25 vulnerable tenants were dehousing and 25 affordable rooms were lost in Parkdale. This clearly represents an extreme example of gentrification-driven displacement. This outcome is particularly unfortunate given that City staff had been aware for many years of the instability of this site, and had even responded to a previous

Tenant story: Paul Snider

March 29, 2017

My name is Paul S., and I have experienced at first hand the suffering and displacement that often result from a neighbourhood's rapid, unchecked gentrification.

My meagre savings ran out in 2013, forcing me to relocate from a lovely, rent-controlled bachelor apartment in Riverdale to a lowest-common-denominator of a flophouse called the Queen's Hotel, in South Parkdale.

It is there that I was introduced to the sorts of stressors which plague the impoverished and the marginalized. From bedbugs, roaches, mice and rats, to major repair issues, to negligent landlords—the Queen's had it all.

And yet I was grateful for a place to live, however sub-standard, as I had come within days of homelessness. Moreover, I discovered a little community at the Queen's—my fellow tenants had all experienced poverty or mental illness or addiction, and they understood my struggles without needing them to be explained.

The Queen's billed itself as a "hotel," but in point of fact, it operated as a de facto rooming house, sheltering 20 or 25 of the community's most vulnerable residents over a period of months and years. There were no short-term guests, no reception desk, no amenities common to even the cheapest motels.

In June 2015, when the so-called "BS&R Group of Companies" purchased the Queen's, my home became a place of instability, fear, intimidation, and uncertainty. Even as company representatives personally assured us that our homes were "safe," behind the scenes machinations were underway which would ensure the opposite.

A campaign of harassment ensued: the hot water was permanently turned off. The bathroom doors were removed, depriving us of privacy and dignity. Dozens of frivolous calls to police were made against several of our more outspoken residents. Same-day evictions were common—including the evening expulsion of a woman whom they knew was facing a spinal cord surgery the following morning.

Finally one day, I arrived home to find a notice posted to my door informing us that we were being evicted with six days' notice. The warning concluded with a promise to toss out any and all personal possessions left behind. Those six days were hellish and chaotic. The company actually went so far as to hire an "enforcer"—in this case, an ex-motorcycle gang thug, whom they paid \$500 cash to hang around intimidating us.

This company's contention was that, as a "hotel," the Inkeepers Act legally afforded them the right to expel us with no forewarning. Well, we fought them, taking them to the Landlord and Tenant Board, charging that the Queen's was functionally a rooming house, and that the eviction was thereby illegal (it was eventually settled in mediation).

This move did not stave off our expulsion, however. On August 7, 2015, I arose to find the biker goon standing outside the front entrance, thick tattooed arms crossed, guarding against any incursions by media, our MPP Cheri DiNovo, or other outsiders (my social worker was prevented from joining me upstairs to help move boxes). We had to be out at precisely 11a.m., and those of us who failed to complete the move by then were prevented from finishing the job, and summarily expelled without any of their personal effects. Several lost everything they owned.

Of the 20-odd tenants, three-quarters of us wound up on the street or in the shelter system. I was one of the "lucky" ones—at the eleventh hour, I landed a dreadful room in a squalid rooming house. The woman with the surgery date wound up convalescing in a pup tent. A good friend of mine was assaulted twice in the shelters, resulting in a broken jaw. One tenant, sadly, ended up committing suicide. With bad credit and spotty references, there are still a few of us, 20 months later, who have yet to find stable housing.

This is the human toll of unchecked gentrification. It ruins, and costs, lives. It is a cruel and amoral free-market force which wreaks havoc on the lives of the disadvantaged. Sadly, there appears to be very little political will to meaningfully address the issues created by gentrification. In South Parkdale, we're out here on our own. The PNLTI, and other such initiatives, are grassroots attempts to keep the area livable for its marginalized population, in lieu of any action from City Hall or Queen's Park.

It's not enough. We need leaders who will be proactive and consistent in protecting the city's vulnerable citizens, who will put their endless rhetoric into action. Truth be told, I'm not holding my breath.

I've been on both sides of the tracks now, and it's been an eyeopener. The way in which society neglects and ignores the poor has got to change. We are human beings, and we aren't all the authors of our own misfortunes. I may have made a few mistakes to get here, but I am now mired in a system which is rigged to see me fail.

Post-Script: I may well be facing a similar crisis this summer, when the slumlords who run my flophouse might lose their property after 10 years of neglect and lawbreaking. Once again, housing insecurity will affect me, in a dog-eat-dog rental market with a 1.3% vacancy rate. Just SWELL: the cycle continues..."



Paula Douglas assists Paul Snider during Queens Hotel Eviction on August 7th, 2015.

mass eviction years earlier. Nonetheless, all parties had failed to organize any substantial proactive intervention to avoid this crisis or secure the site as affordable housing. As Paula Douglas of PARC lamented, “This is history repeating itself. This building turned over hands and tenants were ejected years ago. I would like to recommend that this doesn’t happen again and as a community, we take responsibility to assure that these type of owners do not exploit the poor and marginal.”

Other issues can complicate the task of maintaining the tenancy in rooming houses. A property on Macdonell Avenue operated as an unlicensed private rooming house for many years and was owned by the residents of the adjacent building. When the owners were hospitalized and unable to administer the property, TD Bank took control of the properties. When eviction proceedings were initiated, tenant legal support was complicated by the lack of lease agreements or rent receipts. The subsequent sale of the property resulted in at least three tenants becoming homeless. Two others were relocated to Etobicoke, far from the social and service networks of Parkdale.

Emergency Eviction Response

Since the early 2000s the City of Toronto has coordinated the Rooming House Emergency Response Plan, a social service protocol for the sudden or imminent closure of rooming houses. The protocol is activated by the City of Toronto’s Office of Emergency Management (OEM) in emergencies such as fires or mass evictions where multiple tenants are dehousing. On-site tenant relocation support is provided by WoodGreen Community Services, alongside OEM staff,

the Toronto Fire Department, and the Canadian Red Cross. Tenant supports in this program include coordinating community legal supports, providing referral services to internal and external supports, coordinating furniture bank appointments, participating in landlord-tenant mediation, liaising with the City (Municipal Licensing & Standards and Toronto Building), and providing long-term case management for tenants who require ongoing supports.

By most accounts this plan is effective in providing emergency response to mass evictions and supports for rapid tenant relocation. However, the

experience of the mass evictions at 1521 Queen West and other similar sites shows that the City’s response is limited in its mandate to prevent evictions or to preserve deeply affordable housing.

Currently a response is only triggered upon “sudden or imminent closures” and when confirmation is received that residents will be forced to relocate on a firm date. It is quite clear to our study team that a great deal of such evictions could be avoided. In many cases, social agencies and/or the City are aware of sites that are at risk of conversion or redevelopment well before an eviction is commenced. In these situations proactive landlord and tenant engagement could go a long way to prevent evictions before they occur. Furthermore, when rooming houses are upscaled rather than converted, tenants are often pushed out quietly and unbeknownst to local agencies or City staff. In this context 20 tenants could be dehousing from a building over a year without triggering the emergency response.

In recent years the loss of deeply affordable housing has become a critical concern of City staff. In February 2017, in response to the potential loss of 91 units in an SRO hotel called the Palace Arms, Councillor Mike Layton successfully passed a member motion in Council calling on City staff to tackle the loss of deeply affordable housing. Layton lamented that “our shelters are full and over 90,000 households are on our waiting lists for affordable housing, yet despite our efforts to build new units of affordable housing, our existing supply of deeply affordable units is at risk.” Motion MM23.37 directed City staff to identify “policies and programs that we can put in place to further protect the deeply affordable housing provided by single-

room occupancy buildings” and to identify “ways to better protect tenants impacted by development so that they can remain in their communities, as well as on ways to strengthen our tenant relocation and assistance policies.”

It is extremely encouraging that there is work underway to enhance city-wide practices and policies. City staff now have a mandate to develop a response that broadly provides protections for deeply affordable housing and tenants. The findings of this Parkdale Rooming House Study suggest that these protections must be afforded not only to SRO hotels but also to the rooming house stock as a whole. Within Layton’s motion, it is stated that City Planning has itself tracked the loss of at least 266 dwelling rooms across Toronto to large-scale redevelopment since 2014. While this stat in itself is shocking, it ignores the likely hundreds or even thousands of affordable dwelling rooms that have been lost to upscaling and conversion. This study has confirmed the loss of an estimated 347 dwelling rooms in the past 10 years in Parkdale alone. With upwards of 800 dwelling rooms currently at risk, action is urgently needed and welcome. We have thus made specific recommendations in this report for Proactive Eviction Prevention and Response, as well as the Preservation of At-Risk Rooming Houses. Please see pages 52–53.

The Consequences of Evictions

While legal proceedings may hold landowners responsible for illegal evictions after they occur, the BS&R Development case demonstrates how difficult it is to prevent a mass eviction, even when its legality is contested, when a landlord aggressively pursues it. But the legal and procedural details of evictions in Parkdale should not obscure their cost to the health of individuals and of the neighbourhood.

An eviction is an extremely destabilizing event, especially for someone whose financial means will not allow them to maintain the quality of life they had before. Many tenants subject to eviction in Parkdale are long-term occupants of their units, so their rents have increased at a much slower rate than those of comparable units with tenant turnover on the open market. If evicted, these long-term tenants often find it impossible to find alternative accommodation they can afford, meaning they have to leave Parkdale and all its supports. Although many of the tenants from the Queen’s Hotel were relocated to the Palace Arms Hotel at King and Strachan, as of March 2017 its owners are attempting to vacate on similar grounds as those used by BS&R.

Evicting someone who has dealt or is dealing with poverty,

mental illness, or addiction can lead to tragedy. Paul’s story on the previous pages details the human cost of the Queen’s Hotel eviction, including the suicide of one former resident. More recently, Navneet Sondhi died a few weeks after being evicted in March 2017 from his rest home.²³ A familiar and friendly face in South Parkdale, Navneet had been self-sufficient but struggled with addiction and mental health issues. Unfortunately these are not new or exceptional Parkdale stories. In February 1997, Edmond Yu, a homeless, mentally ill patient, was shot during a standoff with Toronto police after being evicted the previous year from an unlicensed Parkdale rooming house.²⁵ An inquest into Edmond’s death concluded that “[h]ousing is a mental health issue and the absence of decent housing is a major determinant of health.”²⁶

While the relationship between higher-income residents and rooming house tenants has been fraught in the past, indications of increased solidarity between these groups are appearing. A resident who reported the eviction of low-income neighbours to the PNLT expressed their concern about the true cost of eviction:

“What landlords and developers cannot appreciate is how much these neighbours are part of our community. One of our neighbours in particular is always there for the elderly residents and the disabled brothers that live close by. Many have lived here for over 10 years, if not longer, and are seniors now. Many of the tenants are on assistance, and not all of our neighbours are in good health. A move would be very difficult for them.”

In another case, residents opposed the redevelopment of a vacant rooming house on Cowan Avenue partly because of the owner’s treatment and eviction of the tenants who had lived there previously.



Navneet Sondhi

06

Recommendations for a 10-Year Affordable Housing Preservation Strategy



To address the escalating crisis of rooming house loss and tenant displacement there is urgent need for a multi-partner, coordinated response. As the Federal government is poised for a reinvestment in a 10-year national housing strategy, we recommend the implementation of a complementary 10-year Affordable Housing Preservation Strategy in Parkdale. There is a historic opportunity to implement an innovative approach to equitable development and smart growth at a neighbourhood scale, while preserving hundreds of affordable housing units in perpetuity. Four key directions for action include:

1. Proactive eviction prevention & response
2. Affordable housing preservation through acquisition & rehabilitation of at-risk private rooming houses by a non-profit Community Land Trust (CLT)
3. Development of new affordable & supportive housing
4. Policy & planning tools that support development without displacement

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A 10-YEAR AFFORDABLE HOUSING PRESERVATION STRATEGY IN PARKDALE.

1. Proactive eviction prevention & response			
Recommendations		Who is responsible	Target
1	Develop information-sharing protocols among local agencies and the City to monitor the stability of at-risk rooming houses.	PNLT, PCLS, WoodGreen, OEM, City Planning	NA
2	Increase legal education for tenants and owners through the <i>Rooming House Stabilization & Eviction Prevention Pilot Project</i> . This legal education project will focus on those who live in or run rooming houses (both licensed and unlicensed), ensuring they understand their rights as tenants or obligations as landlords. It would include the development & delivery of focused legal education for rooming house tenants.	City of Toronto, WoodGreen, PCLS, PARC, PNLT	Stabilize up to 59 rooming houses, 800 tenants provided legal education
3	Support the creation of tenants associations in rooming houses for those seeking to form a tenants association and further supports. To further this objective, the City of Toronto should immediately increase funding for the <i>Tenant Defence Fund</i> , and develop a new grant to assist rooming house tenants.	Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations, PCLS	TBD
4	Local community organizations should take a more active role in the Rooming House Licensing administration by attending hearings and meetings of the board or seeking membership.	PNLT, PARC, PCLS, Regeneration, Cota, PCED Steering Committee	NA

2. Affordable housing preservation through acquisition & rehabilitation of at-risk private rooming houses by non-profit CLT			
Recommendations		Who is responsible	Target
1	Undertake a demonstration project to establish the feasibility of rooming house preservation through non-profit acquisition, rehabilitation and stewardship by the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust and partners.	City of Toronto, PNLT, PARC	Preserve 1 at-risk Rooming House by 2018
2	Initiate 10-year development pipe-line to preserve affordable housing through the non-profit acquisition & rehabilitation of at-risk rooming houses in Parkdale.	City of Toronto, PNLT, PARC, Habitat Services, Cota, Regeneration, St Clair Multifamily Housing, Ecuhome WoodGreen, and more.	Preserve up to 800 units by 2027
3	Develop social finance instrument to raise capital for affordable housing acquisition, preservation and development.	PCED Community Finance Working Group, PNLT, Purpose Capital, CSI,	\$16,000,000 in social finance in 10 years.
4	Develop property maintenance & property management social enterprise or workers' coop that focuses on local hiring & supportive work placements.	Silver Brush, Working For Change, PNLT, PARC, Dufferin Grove Coop.	TBD

3. Development of new affordable & supportive housing			
Recommendations		Who is responsible	Target
1	Prioritize the development of affordable & supportive housing on City-Owned properties (11 Brock, Cowan & Queen Community Hub Development).	Local Councilor, City of Toronto	80 new units
2	Develop purpose-built affordable condominium ownership opportunities for non-profit and supportive housing organizations.	Inv/D and other private sector developers	200 new units
3	Develop mixed-income affordable condominium ownership opportunities for low-, middle-income people, including individuals on fixed income (ODSP, OW, OAS).	Inv/D and other private sector developers	100 new units

4. Policy & planning tools that support development without displacement			
Recommendations		Who is responsible	Target
1	The City of Toronto should expand the City's rental housing protection policies for rooming house properties with 6 or more dwelling rooms, in order to ensure no-net-loss of rooming house rooms for Parkdale and protect and maintain the current level of affordable housing.	City of Toronto	Maintain the current stock of rooming houses at 2700 dwelling rooms as of 2016
2	The City of Toronto should encourage the ongoing affordability of bachelorette units that were legalized through the Parkdale Pilot Project.	City of Toronto	protect the affordability of up to 900 units.
3	The City of Toronto and Province of Ontario should increase the supply of rent supplements that are specifically linked to affordable housing units owned by non-profit organizations.	City of Toronto (SSHA, Affordable Housing Office), Province of Ontario	TBD
4	The City of Toronto should establish a Small Site Affordable Housing Acquisition Fund, that would provide capital to non-profit organizations to acquire and preserve at-risk affordable multi-residential rental properties.	City of Toronto	NA
5	Ministry of Health should increase Habitat Services boarding home subsidies to keep pace with the rising cost of operations. Additionally, new funding should be provided to Habitat to expand the number of boarding home beds it subsidizes in Parkdale.	Province of Ontario, City of Toronto	10% increase in subsidy, 150 new units
6	The PNLT, PARC and the Parkdale Community Economic Development (PCED) Steering Committee should develop a Built Form and Land Use Plan that enshrines rooming houses in its vision, and use this plan as the starting point for discussions with City staff and developers as new development applications and community initiatives occur. Consideration should be made as to how the following planning tools can support this vision: Inclusionary zoning, Secondary Plans and Expropriation.	PNLT, PARC, PCED Steering Committee	NA

1. Proactive eviction prevention & response

	Recommendations	Who is responsible	Target
1	Develop information-sharing protocols among local agencies and the City to monitor the stability of at-risk rooming houses.	PNLT, PCLS, WoodGreen, OEM, City Planning	NA
2	Increase legal education for tenants and owners through the <i>Rooming House Stabilization & Eviction Prevention Pilot Project</i> . This legal education project will focus on those who live in or run rooming houses (both licensed and unlicensed), ensuring they understand their rights as tenants or obligations as landlords. It would include the development & delivery of focused legal education for rooming house tenants.	City of Toronto, WoodGreen, PCLS, PARC, PNLT	Stabilize up to 59 rooming houses, 800 tenants provided legal education
3	Support the creation of tenants associations in rooming houses for those seeking to form a tenants association and further supports. To further this objective, the City of Toronto should immediately increase funding for the <i>Tenant Defence Fund</i> , and develop a new grant to assist rooming house tenants.	Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations, PCLS	TBD
4	Local community organizations should take a more active role in the Rooming House Licensing administration by attending hearings and meetings of the board or seeking membership.	PNLT, PARC, PCLS, Regeneration, Cota, PCED Steering Committee	NA

6-1 Proactive eviction prevention & response

As gentrification accelerates, we expect to see new cases of evictions and displacement through rent increases, illegal evictions, conversions, and demolitions. PARC, WoodGreen Community Services, Parkdale Community Legal Services (PCLS), the City of Toronto and other agencies are already active in tracking and responding to evictions. The PNLT is working with these agencies to bring a new focus to the issue of rooming house evictions in Parkdale. Through coordination and proactive engagement of both landlords and tenants, we believe that we can help prevent, resolve, or mitigate the effects of evictions and loss of housing in Parkdale. Our approach will be built on the following strategies.

6-1-1 Develop information sharing protocols among local agencies and the City to monitor the stability of at-risk rooming houses

The Parkdale Rooming House Study generated a new baseline database of both licensed and unlicensed rooming houses in Parkdale. This database includes a significant amount of new information about rooming houses and their owners and residents. It also identifies at-risk sites and emerging issues including the possibility of sale, the decline of maintenance, and licensing issues. While much of this information will be kept confidential, the PNLT hopes to share pertinent information with local agencies and the City to support preservation objectives. For example, PNLT will share our list of identified at-risk sites with PCLS, who offer legal support to local tenants. If a tenant from one of the sites requests legal support from PCLS to deal with a questionable eviction, PCLS could notify PNLT and WoodGreen of early signs of a rooming house conversion. To allow for this type of information sharing, PCLS would need to get consent from clients to share this information with community partners. New information such as this could be

added to the database. It is important that the database is updated regularly as new information becomes available. An information sharing protocol will address:

- 1) How information will be shared and confidential information is protected;
- 2) How new data collected by the City and local agencies will be added into the database; and
- 3) How new information will trigger action, such as notification of the Office of Emergency Management (OEM).

6-1-2 Increase legal education for tenants and owners through the *Rooming House Stabilization & Eviction Prevention Pilot Project*

The City's OEM and Shelter, Support & Housing Administration (SSHA), in partnership with WoodGreen Community Services, currently operate an emergency social service protocol for the sudden and potential closure of rooming houses. As described on page 50, the program is effective in providing an emergency response to mass evictions and provides supports for rapid tenant relocation. However, it is limited in its mandate to proactively prevent evictions or to maintain the affordability of housing stock. Furthermore, evictions that are occurring as a result of rooming house upscaling in Parkdale are unlikely to unfold in a way that will trigger this emergency response. Rather, unbeknownst to local agencies or City officials, tenants are often pushed out quietly through legal and/or illegal evictions. In a meeting with SSHA in March 2017 our study team learned that City staff recognize this gap and are eager to enhance city-wide practices around homelessness prevention.

To address the gap in the current homelessness prevention protocol, PNLT, PARC, and WoodGreen have developed a framework for a proactive *Rooming House Stabilization & Eviction Prevention Pilot Project*. This pilot aims to demonstrate the impact of a neighbourhood-scale homelessness prevention strategy characterized by

proactive engagement of landlords and tenants of at-risk rooming houses. With a focus on legal education, this project would engage those who live in or run rooming houses (both licensed and unlicensed), ensuring they understand their rights as tenants or obligations as landlords. It too would leverage the powerful work already underway, enhancing the ability to be proactive rather than crisis-driven.

If implemented this program could provide real and lasting benefits to vulnerable and low-income rooming house tenants in Parkdale and repercussive effects for those who live in precarious housing stock across Toronto. Finally, this pilot program could inform a model for a broader city-wide policy discussion on a rooming house eviction prevention strategy and contribute to the forthcoming national housing strategy.

We recommend that WoodGreen Community Services pursue funding for a full-time program coordinator whose duties would include:

1. Proactive property owner and landlord engagement and education:
 - Development and/or distribution of resources on rights and legal obligations of residential landlords including information on community-based resources with related expertise.
 - Provision of support to landlords through regular engagement.
 - Provision of succession planning support for owners of properties at high risk of upscaling and conversion.
2. Preemptive tenant engagement and education:
 - Development and distribution of resources on rights and legal obligations of residential tenants including information on community-based resources with related expertise.
 - Provision of Know Your Rights workshops targeted to rooming house tenants.
 - Referral to the Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations (FMTA) for those seeking to form a tenants association.
3. Short-term case management:
 - Provision of issue-specific case management for residents of rooming houses who face threats to their tenancy due to potential upscaling or conversion.
4. Information collection and dissemination:
 - Development of a centralized database of information on the status of rooming houses and ongoing population of the database through landlord and tenant engagement.
 - Development of a protocol for disseminating

information about changes in status to project partners and other community agencies who support and engage with tenants.

- Proposal of a protocol for responding to indications of potential mass evictions due to potential property upscaling and/or conversion.
4. At-risk rooming house evaluation:
 - Categorization of rooming houses with regard to their protection status under the RTA.
 - Regular visits to all sites to evaluate risk of emerging crises and to determine need for enactment of response protocol.

6-1-3 Support the creation of tenants associations in rooming houses. To further this objective, the City of Toronto should immediately increase funding for the *Tenant Defence Fund*, and develop a new grant to assist rooming house tenants.

It is extremely important that rooming house tenants are supported to come together to improve their situation as tenants. While all tenants have the legal right under the Residential Tenancies Act to organize tenants associations, and tenant organizing is common across Parkdale, our study team found only one active tenant association in a rooming house in the neighbourhood. This is very concerning, given the many challenges faced by tenants. When speaking with tenants our study team heard horror stories of unsafe housing, deferred maintenance, mistreatment by landlords, and illegal evictions. Furthermore, as an increasing number of rooming house tenants are likely to experience evictions linked to upscaling or eviction, tenants could benefit greatly from peer-to-peer support and/or collective action. The one association we did encounter was quite new. Formed in early 2017 by long-term tenants of a 35-unit bachelorette building, the group came together around a concern that the sale of their building would lead to rising rents and/or evictions. While informally organized, this group expressed a keen interest in learning more about tenants associations and tenant rights.

Further engagement with tenants is needed to determine how best to support tenants coming together. We recommend that PARC, PCLS, and/or the FMTA actively consult with local rooming house tenants to define how to support the creation of tenant groups in rooming houses.

6-1-4 Local community organizations should take a more active role in the Rooming House Licensing administration by attending hearings and meetings of the board or seeking membership.

2. Affordable housing preservation through acquisition & rehabilitation of at-risk private rooming houses by non-profit CLT			
Recommendations		Who is responsible	Target
1	Undertake a demonstration project to establish the feasibility of rooming house preservation through non-profit acquisition, rehabilitation and stewardship by the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust and partners.	City of Toronto, PNLT, PARC	Preserve 1 at-risk Rooming House by 2018
2	Initiate 10-year development pipe-line to preserve affordable housing through the non-profit acquisition & rehabilitation of at-risk rooming houses in Parkdale.	City of Toronto, PNLT, PARC, Habitat Services, Cota, Regeneration, St Clair Multifaith Housing, Ecuhome WoodGreen, and more.	Preserve up to 800 units by 2027
3	Develop social finance instrument to raise capital for affordable housing acquisition, preservation and development.	PCED Community Finance Working Group, PNLT, Purpose Capital, CSI,	\$16,000,000 in social finance in 10 years.
4	Develop property maintenance & property management social enterprise or workers' coop that focuses on local hiring & supportive work placements.	Silver Brush, Working For Change, PNLT, PARC, Dufferin Grove Coop.	TBD

6-2 Affordable housing preservation through acquisition & rehabilitation of at-risk private rooming houses by a non-profit Community Land Trust (CLT)

This study has shown that private rooming houses, which represent 86% of the stock in Parkdale, are being lost at an alarming rate. Twenty-eight rooming houses have been lost to conversion and upscaling gentrification, displacing an estimated 347 people. We believe 59 more, housing approximately 818 people, are at imminent risk of being lost. This study has shown that there is currently an accelerating transition underway, by which older rooming house owners who often identify as affordable housing providers are selling off their portfolios to speculative investors interested in gentrifying rooming house properties. Without an intervention this transition will create increasing inequality and hurt Parkdale's most vulnerable residents. It will also have major repercussions for government and the non-profit housing operators that these residents will turn to for alternative housing and/or emergency supports. On the other hand, this transition presents a unique opportunity to implement a neighbourhood-scale program of equitable development. There is a real opportunity to revitalize and re-organize this important housing stock into a more equitable, sustainable, and effective housing economy. An intervention of this scale will inspire the imaginative potential of true collaboration between government, non-profit, and value-aligned private sector partners alike.

The solution we propose is simple. To truly protect the homes and health of local residents, Parkdale's at-risk rooming houses should be acquired, improved, and secured as affordable housing under non-profit community ownership. A neighbourhood-scale intervention is needed to prevent eviction, displacement, and homelessness for thousands of vulnerable residents.

6-2-1 Undertake a demonstration project to establish the feasibility of rooming house preservation through non-profit acquisition, rehabilitation, and stewardship by the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust & partners.

To commence this 10-year strategy, a successful demonstration project should be implemented to prove the viability of acquiring, rehabilitating, and securing an at-risk private rooming house under its proposed CLT model. This activity should be leveraged to develop replicable tools and procedures as well as an understanding of the capacity needed to scale up an effective development pipeline.

6-2-2 Initiate 10-year development pipe-line to preserve affordable housing through the non-profit acquisition & rehabilitation of at-risk rooming houses in Parkdale.

As the centre point of our 10-year Affordable Housing Preservation Strategy for Parkdale, we propose the acquisition and rehabilitation of at-risk private rooming houses by the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust (PNLT) and other non-profit affordable housing organizations. The primary goals of this strategy are twofold: to preserve affordable housing for low- and very-low income individuals, and to assure that this housing is secured as affordable housing in perpetuity.

As the federal government is poised to reinvest in a 10-Year national housing strategy, we believe this is a unique one-time opportunity to secure up to 800 units of much-needed affordable housing in Parkdale.

OUR 10-YEAR AFFORDABLE HOUSING PRESERVATION STRATEGY FOR PARKDALE PROPOSES THE ACQUISITION AND REHABILITATION OF AT-RISK PRIVATE ROOMING HOUSES BY THE PNLT AND OTHER NON-PROFIT AFFORDABLE HOUSING ORGANIZATIONS.

Rationale

There is a strong rationale for targeting existing rooming house stock to preserve and enhance affordable housing:

- Existing Vulnerable Tenant Base: Existing tenant base consists primarily of low-income and vulnerable individuals on fixed incomes. If this housing is lost they could be displaced as there is no replacement housing.
- Homelessness Prevention Strategy: If displaced, many rooming house tenants will be forced into homelessness.
- High Demand: There is an extremely high demand for this housing type by low-income residents in Toronto.
- Existing Housing Stock: Existing housing stock can be acquired and rehabilitated faster and for less than newly built development.
- Immediate Impact: Securing this housing will create an immediate impact, adding new units to the social housing stock.
- Cost Effective: The upfront costs of acquisition and rehabilitation are lower than the purchase and development of new housing.
- Known To The City: The existing housing stock is well known to City Planning, having been rezoned through the Parkdale Pilot Project.
- Neighbourhood Integration: The existing housing stock is well integrated into the neighbourhood fabric, and site improvements would require minimal public consultation or disruption.

PNLT's Role & Development Approach

The PNLT is deeply rooted in Parkdale and maintains close ties to most social service agencies, City staff, and local elected representatives. The organization should act as a “catalytic intervener” of this preservation strategy, identifying sites for acquisition, organizing funding and financing, and selecting qualified non-profit housing operating partners. PNLT should aim to develop a project pipeline, organizing acquisitions and rehabilitations in bundles to maximize impact and benefit from higher economies of scale. A framework for development without displacement should be developed, which could include undertaking building renovation through a phased approach to minimize tenant disruption and temporary relocation.

The Community Land Trust (CLT) is a non-profit organization that acquires and owns land for community benefits including permanently affordable housing for low-income residents. It removes land from the real estate market, and instead holds land in trust to ensure long-term affordability. In this proposed model PNLT would own rooming house properties, providing below-market 10- to 50-year leases to qualified non-profit charitable housing operators. These operators would be responsible for the full operations of the housing including building management, tenant selection, and support services. In the case of a housing operator ceasing its operations or failing to meet its obligations to provide safe, secure, and affordable housing, the PNLT would be empowered to end the lease and identify a new qualified operator. Through this arrangement, both the affordable housing stock and any public investment would be protected to maximize its social benefit to the community in the long-run.

6-2-3 Develop social finance instrument to raise capital for affordable housing acquisition, preservation, & development.

6-2-4 Develop property maintenance & property management social enterprise or workers' coop that focuses on local hiring & supportive work placements.

3. Development of new affordable & supportive housing

	Recommendations	Who is responsible	Target
1	Prioritize the development of affordable & supportive housing on City-Owned properties (11 Brock, Cowan & Queen Community Hub Development).	Local Councilor, City of Toronto	80 new units
2	Develop purpose-built affordable condominium ownership opportunities for non-profit and supportive housing organizations.	JvN/D and other private sector developers	200 new units
3	Develop mixed-income affordable condominium ownership opportunities for low-, middle-income people, including individuals on fixed income (ODSP, OW, OAS).	JvN/D and other private sector developers	100 new units

6- 3 Develop New Affordable & Supportive Housing

Parkdale is at a stage in its history that presents the community with significant opportunity to shape equitable development.

Parkdale can expect to see applications for new mid-rise and high-rise development in the near future. Demand for condominium properties in close proximity to downtown Toronto is increasing, especially as the prices for single-family homes outstrip the resources of younger purchasers. Evidence of an imminent development wave is also suggested by the 2016 Census tract-level data analysis, which shows census tracts with population increases of at least 2,000 encroaching on Parkdale from the east and north. South Parkdale census tracts, meanwhile, either remained stable or in some cases declined in population. The population decline could be attributable to loss of affordability and the conversion of properties such as rooming houses into single-family homes or more up-market accommodation.

In a city that is growing at one of the fastest rates in the country, the decline in Parkdale's population resembles the vacating of a neighbourhood in advance of an encroaching change. City-wide population projections tell us as much. The city at large is expected to grow by 32% from 2011 to 2141, while the city's core, stretching from Bathurst to the Don Valley, is expected to grow by 90%.

The demographic and housing market trends discussed above are enough to tell us that, in addition to safeguarding existing affordable housing assets, the community should begin exploring new development opportunities. Affordable housing will constitute a significant portion of Parkdale's growth in housing demand, but without concerted efforts to coordinate equitable development it is unlikely this demand will be met.

A mid-rise affordable or supportive housing development is consistent with the policy expressed in provincial and municipal planning frameworks, which support intensification within built-up urban areas well served by public transit and community services. Parkdale is crossed by three of the city's 10 busiest surface transit routes, the King and Queen streetcars and the Dufferin bus, which, along their entire routes together carry 147,000 passengers a day.

6- 3-1 Prioritize the development of affordable & supportive housing on City Owned properties (11 Brock, Cowan & Queen Community Hub Development)

The City of Toronto must play a leading role in catalysing the development of new purpose built supportive housing and deeply affordable housing. In both cases, the City should strive to support social ownership models that provide affordability in perpetuity. 11 Brock, in particular, is one site that presents a unique opportunity to develop purpose built supportive housing on city-owned land. The City should additionally make efforts to partner with local non-profit housing providers and to prioritize tenancy of new units to tenants needing relocation from deeply affordable housing being lost within the area.

As identified in the Parkdale Community Planning Study (2016) "the utilization of public assets" for affordable housing development "should not be limited to surplus public lands, but should include underutilized public assets for community benefit." The City of Toronto should thus explore the possibility of developing new affordable housing within the proposed Cowan & Queen Community Hub Development. The City should work with other levels of government to organize the adequate public investment to provide 80-100% affordable housing units. Promising examples of similar projects elsewhere include:

- WoodGreen Community Centre (Toronto) - includes 36 units of affordable & supportive housing above a community centre.
- nēcā?mat ct Strathcona Public Library Branch (Vancouver) - includes the YWCA Cause We Care House, 21 units of affordable housing for single mothers above a library.
- Sunset Park Library (Brooklyn) - 49 affordable housing units above a public library.

6- 3-2 Develop purpose built affordable condominium ownership opportunities for non-profit and supportive housing organizations.

In the current market, most social housing providers do not have the financial or organizational capacity to create new housing stock. Partnering with a private-sector developer can be mutually beneficial and working together, socially-minded investors and social housing agencies are able to provide access to core-funding and grants, especially for this new market which is under-served by the existing Land Development Industry. Creating new purpose-built housing to serve a broader range of incomes also allows accommodation be designed in collaboration its end-users, and avoids the high, almost comparable cost of retrofitting existing buildings.

JvN/d continues to monitor real estate transactions in the neighbourhood, and has a variety of socially-minded partners that are interested in targeting the acquisition of sites that are suitable for low-, and mid-rise development (i.e., of a certain size, along arterial transit routes, etc.). Each site is evaluated for development potential using Single Room Occupancy (SRO) type floor plates where every unit has a self-contained bathroom and access to cooking facilities. This type of design allows mid- and lower-income individuals to enter into ownership; spaces are carefully designed to enable these relatively small “starter units” to be combined (or later, re-subdivided) to meet the initial buyers’ subsequent needs to expand their initial units as their household grows or changes. In this model, social housing agencies could also purchase blocks of units that they could operate as supportive housing.

6- 3-3 Develop mixed-income affordable condominium ownership opportunities for low-, middle-income people, including individuals on fixed income (ODSP, OW and OAS).

Parkdale is a rapidly growing neighbourhood, and housing needs will only become more acute for middle- and lower-income households. The need for new, purpose-built social housing, managed by social housing providers, is clear, though new accessible ownership housing stock must also be created. Starting first with extensive community-based engagement, there is an opportunity to provide ownership to an increasing under-served market. This public engagement process will require coordination, flexible design principles, strong financial partners, and a supportive planning regime. JvN/d and its partners hope to work with local residents to align these needs and provide better affordable housing, new opportunities for entry into home ownership, and economic development in Parkdale.

4. Policy & planning tools that support development without displacement			
Recommendations		Who is responsible	Target
1	The City of Toronto should expand the City's rental housing protection policies for rooming house properties with 6 or more dwelling rooms, in order to ensure no-net-loss of rooming house rooms for Parkdale and protect and maintain the current level of affordable housing.	City of Toronto	Maintain the current stock of rooming houses at 2700 dwelling rooms as of 2016
2	The City of Toronto should encourage the ongoing affordability of bachelorette units that were legalized through the Parkdale Pilot Project.	City of Toronto	protect the affordability of up to 900 units.
3	The City of Toronto and Province of Ontario should increase the supply of rent supplements that are specifically linked to affordable housing units owned by non-profit organizations.	City of Toronto (SSHA, Affordable Housing Office), Province of Ontario	TBD
4	The City of Toronto should establish a Small Site Affordable Housing Acquisition Fund, that would provide capital to non-profit organizations to acquire and preserve at-risk affordable multi-residential rental properties.	City of Toronto	NA
5	Ministry of Health should increase Habitat Services boarding home subsidies to keep pace with the rising cost of operations. Additionally, new funding should be provided to Habitat to expand the number of boarding home beds it subsidizes in Parkdale.	Province of Ontario, City of Toronto	10% increase in subsidy, 150 new units
6	The PNLT, PARC and the Parkdale Community Economic Development (PCED) Steering Committee should develop a Built Form and Land Use Plan that enshrines rooming houses in its vision, and use this plan as the starting point for discussions with City staff and developers as new development applications and community initiatives occur. Consideration should be made as to how the following planning tools can support this vision: Inclusionary zoning, Secondary Plans and Expropriation.	PNLT, PARC, PCED Steering Committee	NA

6- 4 Policy & Planning Recommendations

6-4-1 The City of Toronto should expand the protection policies offered under their Residential Rental Property Demolition and Conversion Control By-law, to include rooming house properties with six or more dwelling rooms, not just units. This would help to prevent the net loss of rooming house rooms in Parkdale, and protect and maintain the neighbourhood's current level of affordable housing.

6-4-2 The City of Toronto should encourage the ongoing affordability of bachelorette units that were legalized through the Parkdale Pilot Project. This could be facilitated, in part, by ongoing and consistent monitoring of any applied-for and issued building permits associated with these at-risk properties.

6-4-3 The City of Toronto and Province of Ontario should increase the supply of rent supplements specifically linked to affordable housing units owned by non-profit organizations.

6-4-4 The City of Toronto should establish a Small Site Affordable Housing Acquisition Fund. This would provide capital to non-profit organizations allowing them to acquire and preserve at-risk affordable, multi-residential rental properties.

6-4-5 The Ministry of Health should increase Habitat Services' boarding home subsidies at a pace that matches the rising costs of operating these properties. Additionally, new funding should be provided in order to expand the number of Habitat-subsidized boarding home beds in Parkdale.

6-4-6 The PNLT, PARC, and the Parkdale Community Economic Development (PCED) Steering Committee should develop a Built Form and Land Use Plan, enshrining the essential role that rooming houses play in providing affordable housing in Parkdale. This plan would be used as the starting point for future discussions with City staff and developers as new development applications and community initiatives occur.

The Parkdale Rooming House Study and the PCED Planning Study Report can serve as the basis of a Built Form and Land Use Plan for Parkdale. A built form and land use plan is built around maps or plans that propose how the neighbourhood should grow in coming years. Guidelines can address anything from building height, massing, and density to land-use concerns such as housing and commercial typologies, community services, and public space.

A PCED Built Form and Land Use Plan would serve as a strategic tool for community organization and advocacy in discussions with the City about new development and community planning. In particular, the plan should enshrine rooming houses as an integral part of the Parkdale landscape. The plan should lay out a list of community priority investments and use the findings of the Rooming House Study to make a clear and quantifiable case for the number of units that need to be protected and how that can be achieved. The primary means can include:

- Contributions towards the purchase of existing buildings;
- Contributions of financing or land to the development of new non-profit building that will meet the needs of rooming house tenants; and
- Requirements for new private development to provide units that will meet the needs of rooming house tenants and be

operated by a third party. The more clear, concise and quantifiable the list of community needs, the better it will serve as a tool for negotiation.

Inclusionary Zoning

In December 2016 the Province of Ontario passed the Promoting Affordable Housing Act, which grants municipalities the power to implement inclusionary zoning regimes. Inclusionary zoning is a tool that permits municipalities to require development proposals to include affordable housing units and that those units be maintained as affordable for a specified period of time.

The City of Toronto is now required to develop a plan for how this policy will be implemented in City policies and the zoning by-law. The City will be responsible for setting targets for how much affordable housing is needed, the threshold for the triggering of this policy, and other aspects of implementation such as the length of time the units must be maintained as affordable or the definition of affordable. When the City has started developing its implementation plan, the PNLT should provide a detailed position statement on how the policy should be implemented in Parkdale.

Secondary Plans and Avenue Studies

The main document the City of Toronto uses to guide growth and development across the city is Toronto's Official Plan. Within the Official Plan are subsets of plans that go into more detail about how land should be used and developed. Two of these types of plans are Secondary Plans and Avenue Studies. These plans contain guidelines for urban design and land use, open space and community amenities, among other things. The City Planning Division has no immediate plans for Avenue studies or secondary plans in Parkdale, and from start to finish the process can take many years and, upon completion, is appealable to the Ontario Municipal Board.

The Parkdale Rooming House Study and the PCED Planning Study have both been robust community planning exercises and each clearly identifies Parkdale's need for the protection and promotion of affordable housing. If a City-initiated Secondary plan or Avenue study process begins, the PNLT and PARC are well placed to speak as a major neighbourhood voice, and to have those priorities built into any future plan.

Expropriation

Expropriation is a frequently used municipal tool, typically though not exclusively used for major infrastructure projects such as subways or storm sewers. It is within the City's powers to expropriate private property against the landowner's will if there is a municipal need for the property. In 2006 the City of Toronto expropriated a derelict private rooming house in Parkdale (1495 Queen Street West) for affordable housing. The property was subsequently developed into supportive housing by PARC. A full description of this process can be found on page 58 of this report.

07

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Social service provider, Woodgreen Community Services

Staff member, City Planning

Staff member, Municipal Licensing & Standards, City of Toronto (2)

7-2 THE HISTORY OF ROOMING HOUSES IN PARKDALE

Authors:

Mervyn Horgan - Professor, University of Guelph

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In order to understand the issues facing rooming houses today, it is important to understand how the debate about the value and legitimacy of rooming houses has transpired over the decades. Rooming houses in Parkdale have been the subject of continual government and higher-income resident scrutiny, despite having been a part of the neighbourhood since at least the 1930s. The City and some neighbourhood residents have struggled with how to define the role of rooming houses in Parkdale, or have simply tried to recast the neighbourhood as not appropriate for rooming houses at all.

Standard accounts of Parkdale's history seem to suggest a middle- and upper-class past where all was relatively calm and well until the construction of the Gardiner Expressway in the 1950s and the psychiatric deinstitutionalization in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The truth, as always, is much more complicated than a straightforward story of beauty, decline, and revitalization. The truth is that the area has long had a large working class population, and a high proportion of renters. Social service agencies began assuming a strong role in stabilizing rooming houses and providing services to their tenants in the late 1970s and 1980s and have played an important though necessarily reactive role in this process. With the withdrawal of support for psychiatric survivors and the concentration of poverty in Parkdale, the roles of social service agencies have had to change in response to crises.

Apartments, Tenements, and "Chicken Coops"

In the early 20th century, Parkdale saw a growing presence of working class housing and the diversification of housing types. Immediately prior to World War I, Toronto saw a rapid increase in apartment housing developments, generally consisting of three-storey walk-ups that were promoted as rentable and saleable to singles of various sorts: widows, childless couples, and groups of single women.¹ At this time "apartments" were considered the same as "tenements" and their presence could mean the impending birth of a slum. In 1912, Toronto's medical officer called apartment houses "human packing cases" and a "menace."²



Patrick Chu, 31, a former psychiatric patient, sits in his room in a Parkdale boarding house. Toronto Star Archives, April 1982.

Local objections and legal obstacles aside, apartment houses in Parkdale proved to be particularly lucrative for landlords, many of whom built apartment houses alongside their own residences. In 1912, no apartment house in Parkdale commanded cumulative annual rents of less than 10% of property value, with one Parkdale building advertising net returns from rent of a full 25% of property value per annum.³

By the 1930s, the Great Depression had had an obvious impact on the area, and the larger houses south of Queen Street were increasingly divided up into apartments and/or took in boarders as their mere size made them difficult to maintain as single-family homes. At the same time, the smaller working class houses north of Queen became more economically viable for single families. And so, “[t]he homes

of the rich became the homes of the poor. The homes of the poor became the homes of the rich.”

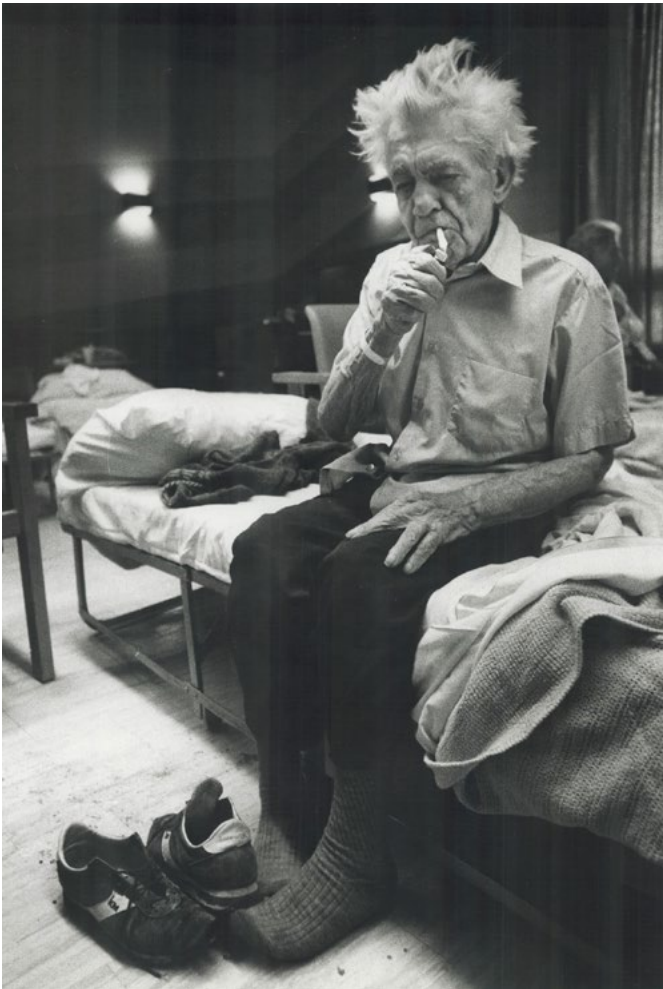
Dislodging Slums

In the 1950s, the rhetoric of “slum clearance” began to permeate government discussions about low-income neighbourhoods, and would radically transform Parkdale. The Gardiner Expressway was built in 1955, demolishing streets and houses in its path. Both before and after the construction of the expressway, many of the properties referred to above were inhabited by large numbers of single men employed in manufacturing. Clearly, Parkdale has been a neighbourhood with a lot of housing diversity and, likely, a high concentration of rooming houses decades before the construction of the expressway and psychiatric deinstitutionalization, even though it is these events that are often blamed for the neighbourhood’s decline.

Psychiatric Deinstitutionalization, Neighbourhood Pushback, and Community Supports

Psychiatric deinstitutionalization proper began in Ontario in 1965. Between 1959 and 1969, the population of patients resident at the Queen Street Mental Health Centre went from 1,354 to 541.⁴ As with elsewhere in the Western world, enthusiasm for deinstitutionalization was high but there was a remarkable absence of adequate planning for housing and services for discharged patients. Most discharged patients went west of the hospital, past the Dufferin Street bridge and into Parkdale in search of affordable accommodation. By 1975 Parkdale’s grand old houses were being converted to 10- to 15-unit apartments at such a rate that a local alderman proposed a freeze to halt the process immediately. Local representatives agreed that Parkdale was now “the biggest problem area in the whole city” and was becoming a “ghetto.” The irony here is that it is likely that a great number of these conversions had not been single-family homes for several decades.

The late 1970s marks in earnest the start of organized community responses to the needs of low-income residents living in rooming houses, especially those who were also psychiatric survivors. Community and non-profit organizations were attempting to organize responses that would supplement the housing and social services withdrawn from residents upon their deinstitutionalization. In 1980, the Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre (PARC) opened its doors at 1499 Queen Street West in order to provide much-needed social and community support to local residents and to combat the social isolation experienced by many psychiatric survivors.



Reg Brooks, 68, of Carter Manor on Tyndall Avenue, Parkdale. Residents were moved out after an early morning fire at the home in March 1986.

In the 1980s, advocates, mental health workers, and housing providers voiced serious concerns about consumers/survivors of the mental health system being housed in boarding homes with very poor living conditions. Habitat Services was established in 1987 to help address these concerns and improve the quality of life for tenants by providing funding, monitoring, and tenant support. Through a commercial contract with landlords, Habitat Services is able to help improve building standards and services. The Habitat model also provides a measure of protection to tenants living in precarious housing and helps stabilize buildings that could otherwise become the subject of complaints.

Other organizations took a more direct role in stabilizing the patchwork of affordable and supportive housing in Parkdale. Ecuhome and Mainstay Housing assumed possession of numerous rooming house properties in Parkdale and across Toronto in an effort to protect this informal and precarious stock of affordable housing and improve conditions and services. Mainstay, in particular, focused on providing services for survivors of mental health facilities.

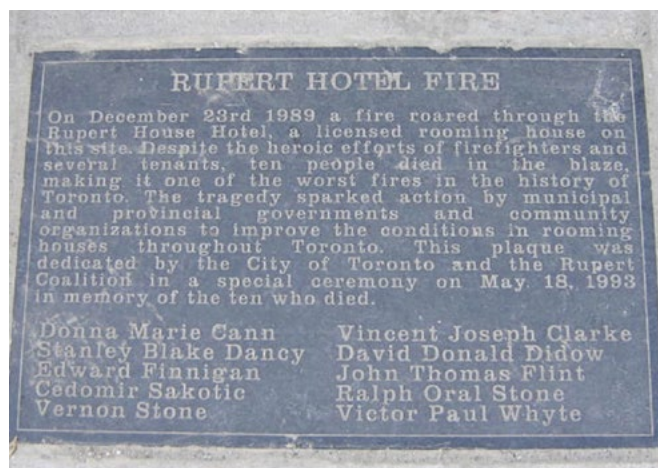
Tenants themselves began to organize, creating a group called Roomers' Rights, which advocated for improved protections for rooming house tenants and provided peer support for tenants regarding issues such as building conditions or evictions.

Despite these community non-profit stabilization efforts, homeowner associations continued to advocate against rooming houses and bachelorettes. In response to this pressure, Mayor John Sewell favoured more rigorous building inspections and enforcement of existing laws; other members of the Task Force established to study the subject wanted "to rid south Parkdale of the illegal buildings and the social problems that go with them."⁵ Representations made to the Task Force by homeowners claimed that the area had become "an unbearable hell unfit for decent people," and called bachelorettes "a cancer."⁶ By 1980, residents began to express some "hope" that the area would "be good again," and "reconverted as quickly as possible to a family type of housing."⁷

Rupert Hotel Coalition Efforts to Improve Rooming Houses

Rooming houses were thrust front and centre once again when, in 1989, a fire in the Rupert Hotel at Queen and Parliament killed 10 people. The Rupert Hotel Coalition was commissioned by the City of Toronto to undertake a study

and released a report that proposed three pilot projects, including two in Parkdale. The Dowling Street rooming house pilot project was successful for its duration in improving living conditions and safety with the help of subsidies and oversight, but within one month of the end of the funding almost all of the original tenants had moved out, meals had become irregular once again, and physical conditions had deteriorated.



A second pilot project at 1495 Queen Street West (also known as 194 Dowling Avenue) failed to start, as the landowner was unwilling to enter into the contractual obligations necessary for improvements. The building was central to tragedy several years later, when a recently evicted resident suffering from mental illness was killed by police in 1997, and two residents perished in a 1998 fire.

Once again, community non-profit agencies responded to the crisis in the absence of a comprehensive government response. The fire at 194 Dowling had left upwards of 60 people without housing and with no government service present to assist in rehousing them. A subsequent fire at 17 Maynard resulted in the displacement of more tenants. PARC provided front line assistance to tenants where possible, and also successfully advocated that an emergency protocol be established in cases where rooming house tenants are evicted en masse or forced to leave because of a fire or similar incident. Through the Critical Incident Working Group (CIWG) an emergency protocol was developed, which to this day is administered by the City of Toronto, WoodGreen Community Services, and the Canadian Red Cross.

The Development of Edmond Place

Following the fire, 1495 Queen Street West sat derelict for eight years until the owner began new renovations, prompting then Ward 14 Councillor Silvia Watson to organize a public meeting on July 18, 2006. With 120 local residents present, the owner presented photocopied floor plans with magic marker showing his development plans. Residents overwhelmingly rejected these plans. On the same day, Councillor Watson put forward a motion to City Council leading to the first-ever expropriation of private land by the City of Toronto for affordable and supportive housing. Later that year, the Affordable Housing Office released a Request for Proposals (RFP), which PARC responded to and eventually won. In the years to come PARC received significant opposition from local residents and even non-profit organizations. This prompted PARC to form the PARC

Ambassadors Team, a group of members with lived experience of housing insecurity, mental illness, and addiction, whose mission was to represent PARC to the community at large, to advocate and educate about oppression in Parkdale in a non-judgmental and inclusive manner. The Ambassadors program was extremely successful in building local support for PARC's redevelopment of 1495 Queen West.

In 2010, PARC opened Edmond Place. Named after Edmond Yu, the former tenant killed by police after being evicted from 1495 Queen West, the purpose-built supportive housing building provides 29 self-contained units with room and board. Habitat Services provides operating subsidies to Edmond Place. The services and supports at Edmond Place were co-designed with members through a consultative process.



Toronto Star. October 29, 2007.



PARC members participating in Edmond Place planning meeting.



Edmond Place. 29 self-contained units of supportive housing operated by PARC at 1495 Queen Street West.

Legalizing Rooming Houses—the Parkdale Pilot Project

In the 1990s, South Parkdale was seen as the “final frontier” of Queen Street’s artistic, cultural and social transformation⁹ and by the 1990s the City was under significant pressure from residents associations and tenant advocacy organizations to further regulate rooming houses in Parkdale. In 1998 the City launched a year-long conflict mediation process involving tenants, landlords, homeowners, and social service providers. The mediation process focused on nine primary issues related to bachelorettes in Parkdale: zoning controls; the creation of a new Parkdale housing board; tax incentives and rates; retrofit programs; licensing

and building standards and enforcement; appropriate unit sizes and mix; standards for pre- and post-1978 buildings; affordability and tenant protection issues; and neighbourhood and building aesthetics.¹⁰

The Parkdale Pilot Project was the culmination of this conflict resolution process. The project was meant to be the vehicle for implementing recommendations. These included:

- Licensing bachelorette buildings, pre-1978, post-1978, and post-1996, according to the agreed-upon standards;
- Minimizing and dealing with any cases of tenant relocation; and
- Ensuring ongoing maintenance and standards.

The project was fully operational for three years, during which time 96 properties, and 800 units, were legalized through site-specific rezoning, giving inspectors access to buildings that they had not been able to enter for at least 20 years. However, City Planning and Municipal Licensing & Standards (ML&S) did not prioritize the goals and outcomes of the project, funding was inadequate, and there was high staff turnover.¹¹ The project improved the quality of many bachelorettes, yet not enough resources were allocated to it, recordkeeping was poor, and no mechanism was established for addressing non-compliant landlords.¹² Additionally, although the project's stated goal was to legalize and inspect this housing stock, it did not institute many protections for tenants, and thought was not put into what would happen to residents if landlords could not meet the City's demands.¹⁷

Since 2000 the relationship between residential homeowners and rooming houses owners has stabilized, perhaps in part because of a shift in the neighbourhood's economic fortunes. In the last two decades of real estate growth, Parkdale's cheap housing stock has also become increasingly appealing to higher-income potential residents.

Gentrification and Increasing Rooming House Loss

Since the Parkdale Pilot Project, there has been little oversight of rooming houses or bachelorettes. Throughout the late 2000s, however, local agencies such as PARC reported that they commonly supported tenants evicted from gentrifying rooming houses, which were assumed to be converting to single-family homes. PARC's role in particular was to support tenants to find new places to live. Until recently tenants were often able to find alternative housing in Parkdale. However, by 2015 this was no longer the case.

In the summer of 2015, the mass eviction from 1521 Queen Street West of 25 tenants, many of whom were PARC



Toronto Star. August 22, 2015.

members, provided a major wake-up call. The building was a commercial and residential building that was purchased in 2015 by BS&R Development Group Inc., a boutique condominium developer. Soon after the purchase, BS&R undertook a swift seven-day eviction, which local organizations viewed to be in violation of the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA). This incident triggered a rapid and coordinated response involving local service organizations such as PARC and Parkdale Community Legal Services, as well as the City of Toronto's Office of Emergency Management (OEM), its Shelter, Support & Housing Administration (SSHA), and WoodGreen Community Services. While this response ensured that seven tenants were rehoused, it was unsuccessful in stopping the illegal eviction from proceeding (all the tenants were removed within seven days) or in maintaining the units as affordable housing stock. Furthermore, only one tenant was confirmed to be rehoused in Parkdale. As PARC Executive Director Victor Willis recounts, "We heard back from our front-line staff that there were no affordable units available to rehouse people in Parkdale. This is when we knew that something had changed in the neighbourhood."

In the months that followed, PARC tracked multiple smaller rooming house closures in Parkdale. A trend was soon identified when in 2016 the Parkdale Community Economic Development (PCED) planning project and the resulting Community Plan established that there was a concerning trend of rooming house loss in Parkdale.



Paul Snider, a former tenant of the Queens Hotel, speaks out about evictions at community forum held at PARC on September 28th 2015.

1. Dennis (1989: 26) notes that many of the city's apartment developers were residents of Parkdale.
2. Dennis (2000: 273) notes that many of the city's apartment developers were residents of Parkdale.
3. Dennis, (1998: 28-27) notes that many of the city's apartment developers were residents of Parkdale.
4. Homes for Special Care did increase over this period, though these tended to focus specifically on care for older discharged patients (see Allodi & Kedward, 1973: 296)
5. Councillor Barbara Adams, quoted in Margaret Daly "Rift grows over 'change of focus' in task force study on bachelorettes" *Globe and Mail*, 25 June, 1979
6. "Crowded Parkdale 'a hell' city told" *Toronto Star*, March 24, 1979
7. Peter Goodspeed "City Hall predicts Parkdale revival of family homes" *Sunday Star* February 14, 1980.
8. Dennis (1989: 26) notes that many of the city's apartment developers were residents of Parkdale.
9. Slater, T. (2004). *Municipally managed gentrification in South Parkdale. The Canadian Geographer*, 48(3), 303-324.
10. Barna, M. (2007). *Bridging Divides: An Examination of the 1998 Parkdale Conflict Resolution Process. Completed as part of the requirements of the Master of Science of Planning, U of T, April.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. Simons, J. (2009). *Bachelorette Apartments in Parkdale: Evaluation of the Parkdale Pilot Project. (Current Issue Paper).*

7-3 Best Practices in the Design and Operation of Rooming Houses

Author: Joyce Brown, Working for Change

Although the literature on rooming houses in Canada is not large, the need for affordable rooming house stock has been documented, particularly in Toronto and Vancouver.

As part of the City of Toronto's 2016 report on licensing,¹ a consulting group undertook a public consultation process in Spring 2015 to assess how current regulations and the availability of multi-tenant housing stock were affecting tenants, operators, and surrounding communities. Approximately 1,500 people were consulted. The consultants found that:

- rooming houses constitute a significant part of the city's affordable housing stock;
- there are serious issues regarding rooming house management and maintenance;
- better enforcement of rooming houses is needed;
- more affordable housing is needed; and
- tenants need to be connected to communities, advocates, and responsible landlords, and rooming house operators need support for upkeep and maintenance.



Other reports highlight emerging themes related to best practices in the design and operation of rooming houses. The Homelessness Knowledge Report on Good Practices in Rooming Houses² provides a scan of research in Canada, the US, the UK, and Australia. The authors also conducted interviews with rooming house landlords and interviews with coordinators of programs that support rooming house tenants.

The East York East Toronto (EYET) Family Service study³ also looked at best practices in rooming houses. In addition to conducting their own interviews, the EYET researchers reviewed six previous studies (1,641 total interviews). In relation to demographics of the population, they found that 82% of those interviewed in all of the studies were male and 18% female. The majority of tenants were middle aged, single, separated, or divorced. The level of education varied considerably.

Both studies emphasized the importance of considering the tenant population, and the demographics of that population, in the process of making recommendations regarding future acquisition or renovation of rooming houses.

Habitat Services in Toronto also conducted a Tenant Satisfaction Survey²¹ which provided the tenant perspective on boarding home accommodation.

The three reports highlight the following:

- Good landlord-tenant relationships as well as good tenant-to-tenant relationships are key in a successful rooming house. When tenants feel a sense of “ownership,” tenancies are likely to be retained longer. Fostering a sense of community contributes to this sense of ownership.
- Keeping rooming houses well maintained contributes to a good relationship between landlords and tenants.
- The registration and regulation of rooming houses is useful to ensure that rooming houses meet standards and codes, and that they are inspected regularly, while recognizing that landlords need to remain in business.
- Tenant screening is very important. A number of the landlords interviewed involved tenants in the selection of new tenants
- Security is important. This includes tenant screening and physical features such as good locks and in some cases cameras.
- Rules and expectations need to be made clear to all tenants, as well as their rights and responsibilities.
- On-site management is an important factor in lessening the opportunities for drug trafficking, property damage, and noise disturbances.

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- Pay direct is a good practice for ensuring that landlords receive rent and tenants are less likely to face eviction.
 - When evictions are necessary they should be carried out as quickly as possible before other tenants leave the property.
 - Education and information for tenants, operators, and neighbours is needed regarding regulations that apply to rooming houses.
 - Many of the landlords had men-only rooming houses, and they found it more difficult and more conflictual when there were gender-mixed rooming houses.
 - Housing workers who liaise with tenants and the landlord are helpful in problem-solving tenancy issues, as are case managers or support workers who provide more generalized support to tenants.
 - Tenants found it beneficial for a home to be part of a residential neighbourhood, close to amenities, and indistinguishable from other residences.
 - It is preferable to have five or fewer residents share a bathroom and kitchen and/or to have minimal kitchen facilities in each room.
 - Size often affects a sense of community, and buildings with fewer than 50 units were seen to be most desirable;
 - Common rooms can foster a sense of community and there was consensus that they should be located on the ground floor with good sight lines for security;
 - Laundry areas should be located near common rooms;
 - Well-designed outdoor space can foster a sense of community;
 - Men are more likely to prefer shared space than women;
 - Women are more likely to be concerned with safety issues. Good sightlines at the entryway and staff offices at the front of a building are important features as are locks and security systems;
 - Women are also more concerned about kitchen design and adequate cupboard space;
 - The lack of adequate storage space was a common issue, and bicycle storage was noted as being important; and
 - Shared space in houses tends to work better, staff reported, than shared space in high-rise apartment buildings, as houses are more integrated in the community and tend to offer more indoor and outdoor space.

The City of Toronto User Guide, Design Consideration in Developing Alternative Housing,⁴ reviewed nine affordable housing properties in the City of Toronto. The purpose of the review was to recognize the amount of experience and knowledge in the development and design of alternative housing in Toronto and to document this knowledge.

The nine housing projects, all built in the previous 20 years, ranged in size from a three-storey converted house with six tenants to a nine-storey apartment building with 194 tenants who shared apartment units. Those housed included formerly homeless men and women, women and children escaping violence, and individuals with mental health challenges. Some of the housing was gender mixed, two projects were for women, and one was for single men. In three buildings, people had their own apartments, while tenants in the other six lived in rooming houses, shared apartments, or Single Room Occupancy (SRO) units. Tenants, housing staff, development consultants, and architects were consulted in each of the projects as well as City staff and housing advocates.

One of the major findings was that tenant satisfaction was often related to being part of a community, and in many buildings community development was part of the management model. Other factors that influenced satisfaction with a building included:

1. City of Toronto. "Proposed Regulatory and Licensing Strategy for Multi-Tenant Houses & Consultation Plan. To: Executive Committee". From: Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards and Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning/ October 12, 2016.

2. Calhoun Research and Development with Joanne Murray. *Good Practices in Rooming Houses*. A research project carried out for the Homelessness Partnering Strategy, Homelessness Knowledge Development, Human Resources and Skill Development Canada. Moncton, New Brunswick. 2011.

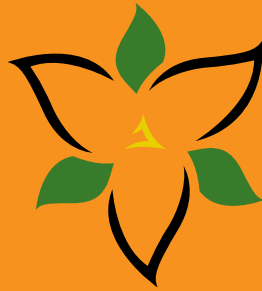
3. East York East Toronto Family Resources and the Rooming House Working Group. *Shared Accommodation in Toronto: Successful Practices and Opportunities for Change in the Rooming House Sector*. Oriole Research & Design Inc. Toronto, 2008.

4. *Working for Change and Habitat Services*. Habitat Services Tenant Satisfaction Survey Report. Toronto.

5. City of Toronto. *Design Consideration in Developing Alternative Housing: A City of Toronto User Guide*. By Levitt Goodman Architects Ltd., Gloria Gallant, Joyce Brown and Sheila Miller. 2005. 2014.

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